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BERNADOTTE

THE FIRST PHASE

1763-1799

By DUNBAR PLUNKET BARTON

JUDGE OF THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE, IRELAND

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BERNADOTTE AND NAPOLEON

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

**BERNADOTTE
THE FIRST PHASE**

1763-1799

**WITH
PORTRAITS AND ILLUSTRATIONS**

G. Roberts, Printer, Dublin.



JEAN BAPTISTE BERNADOTTE

Born 1763, enlisted 1780; Sergeant-Major 1788; Lieutenant 1792; General of Division 1794; Ambassador 1798; Minister of War 1799; Marshal 1804; Prince of Ponte Corvo 1806; Prince Royal of Sweden 1810; King of Sweden and Norway 1818; died 1844.

BERNADOTTE AND NAPOLEON

1763-1810

BY THE RIGHT HONBLE.
SIR DUNBAR PLUNKET BARTON
BARONET, K.C., P.C.

Formerly Solicitor-General for Ireland, and Judge of the High Court in Ireland; Author of "Bernadotte, The First Phase, 1763-1799," "Links between Ireland and Shakespeare," etc.

WITH PORTRAITS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

THIS is the second of a series of three volumes. The first volume, under the title of *Bernadotte The First Phase*, dealt with the life of Bernadotte under the *ancien régime*, during the Terror, and under the Directory, from January 1763, to the Revolution of Brumaire in November 1799. The present volume tells the story of his relations with Napoleon under the Consulate and under the First Empire down to September 1810, when he was elected Prince Royal of Sweden. The third volume, will follow him through the remainder of his career as Heir Apparent to the Swedish throne, and as King of Sweden and Norway. The subject has been approached without bias, and with a desire to allow events and documents to speak for themselves. Besides consulting the regular sources of contemporary evidence, the author has made a careful search among the unpublished records of our Foreign Office for any information that might be of interest to British, Irish, and American readers.

BERNADOTTE AND NAPOLEON

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST PHASE 1763-1799

Page ix, line 13.—*For* "Bernadotte, A Marshal, and "
read "Marshal Bernadotte."

Page ix, line 24.—*For* "Sept. 5 " *read* "Oct. 1."

Page ix, last line.—*For* "Oct. 15—Nov. 5" *read* "Oct.
15—Nov. 6."

Page 102.—Legend of Map.—*For* "Sept. 5" *read*
"Oct. 1."

Page 105, line 31.—Omit "1" (referring to footnote)
and insert the reference "1" after
"General Staff" in line 35.

Page 160.—Legend of Map.—*For* "Oct. 15, Nov. 5"
read "Oct. 15—Nov. 6, 1806."

Page 256, line 10.—*For* "Utland" *read* "Upland."

Page 320, line 23.—After "Bernadotte" omit comma.

of the Revolution gave him an opportunity which he did not fail to seize. In less than three years from the date of his Lieutenant's commission he became a General of Division. In that capacity he served with distinction as one of the divisional commanders of the

¹ *Bernadotte, The First Phase*, John Murray, 1914.



BERNADOTTE AND NAPOLEON

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST PHASE

1763-1799

"Ce que Bernadotte va detester dans Napoleon, ce n'est pas l'homme mais le maître."—A. DRY.

THE story of Bernadotte's rise from the lowest ranks of the French Army to a brilliant position under the First Republic has been told in another book.¹ Before resuming the thread of the subject let us remind ourselves of the first phase of Bernadotte's life and of its relation to the earlier stages of Napoleon's career.

Jean Baptiste Bernadotte, son of a lawyer at Pau, with a dash of Moorish blood in his Gascon veins, was born in 1763. At the age of sixteen he enlisted as a runaway, and, when the French Revolution broke out, had risen to the rank of sergeant. For eleven years the narrow regulations of the *ancien régime* debarred him, on account of his bourgeois extraction, from becoming an officer; and it was to the Revolution that he owed his epaulettes. No wonder that thenceforward the words Liberty and Equality rang true in his ears and that he became an uncompromising opponent of every movement for the restoration of the Bourbon Monarchy. The wars of the Revolution gave him an opportunity which he did not fail to seize. In less than three years from the date of his Lieutenant's commission he became a General of Division. In that capacity he served with distinction as one of the divisional commanders of the

¹ *Bernadotte, The First Phase*, John Murray, 1914.

Army of the Sambre and Meuse in the Belgian campaign of 1794, and in the German campaigns which were fought for the possession of the Rhine in 1795 and 1796.¹

In the meantime Napoleon Bonaparte had been mounting the cliffs of fame by an easier path. Born in 1769, of mixed Corsican and Florentine descent, he was six years younger than Bernadotte. As he was deemed to be of noble birth, he started with the advantage of obtaining a commission at the age of sixteen. In the next lap of the race the Gascon went ahead, becoming a General of Division while the Corsican remained a General of Brigade. It was in 1795 that Bonaparte suddenly shot forward in front of all competitors. Having earned the gratitude of the Government by quelling a Parisian tumult, he received as his reward the command of the army of Italy. In the Italian Campaign of 1796 he acquired a deathless fame, and forthwith became recognised as the greatest soldier of the Republic. In the following year he demanded reinforcements, adding, "As to Generals of Division, I beg of you to send me none but distinguished officers." They sent him Bernadotte, and the two men came face to face at Padua in March 1797. The germs of jealousy and suspicion which were sown at their first interview did not exhibit themselves until the following October, when the Directory were inclined to put forward Bernadotte as a counterpoise to Bonaparte's growing predominance, and, with that object in view, proposed in December 1797 to appoint him to the command of the Army of Italy.²

Bonaparte, seeing danger to himself in this appointment, procured its cancellation, and persuaded the Government to send Bernadotte as Ambassador to Austria. He was the first envoy from Revolutionary

¹ *Bernadotte, The First Phase*, Parts I-IV, pp. 1-177.

² *Ib.*, Parts V-VI, pp. 181-292.

France to the aristocratic Viennese Court since the execution of Marie Antoinette. His mission was so incongruous as to be an impossible one, and culminated in the storming of the Embassy by a mob who tore down and burned the tricolour flag. The incident caused a European sensation, and the manner in which the outraged ambassador bore himself won for him the admiration and confidence of the extreme Republican party in France.¹

It was at this moment (May 1798) that General Bonaparte started on his Expedition to Egypt, confidently expecting that his star would shine with an enhanced brilliancy in an eastern sky. During his absence Bernadotte, having married Désirée Clary, who had been Napoleon's first love and was the sister-in-law of his brother Joseph, was drawn into the Bonaparte family circle. In due course a child of the marriage was born who became Napoleon's god-son; and friendly feelings were engendered which might have ripened into a *rapprochement*, if the course of public events had not served to stimulate Bernadotte's ambition and to make him Napoleon's principal rival.²

In the summer of 1799, while Napoleon was still in Egypt, the French Republic was attacked on three battlefronts—in Italy, in Switzerland, and in Holland. To meet the national emergency Bernadotte was appointed Minister of War. His Ministry lasted only ten weeks. Nevertheless, he so conducted himself as not only to confirm his hold upon the extreme Republicans, but to win the esteem of the more stable classes of society. By a series of eloquent addresses and proclamations he revived the waning fires of military enthusiasm and of civic patriotism; and by his well-directed energies he raised a conscript army, and placed it in the field. The Director, Sieyès, becoming alarmed

¹ *Bernadotte, The First Phase*, Part VII, pp. 293-330.

² *Ib.*, Part VIII, pp. 331-374.

at Bernadotte's growing influence and prestige, procured his resignation by a cunning trick, the exposure of which served to increase the retiring Minister's popularity and to enhance his reputation for independence of character.¹

In October 1799 Bernadotte was in the front rank of the soldiers and statesmen of the day. As an ex-Minister he was eligible for election as one of the five Directors, who were the Republican Kings of France, and the topmost rungs of the political ladder seemed to be within his reach. Unexpectedly, like a bolt from the blue, came the news that General Bonaparte, after an absence of fifteen months, had disembarked at Fréjus. On 18th October he was in Paris.

The saying has often been repeated that Bonaparte on his return from Egypt, "found the crown of France lying in the gutter and picked it up with the point of his sword." Before his task could be accomplished, it was necessary for him to parry the opposition of four prominent men. In October 1799 "there were," wrote Chateaubriand, "only four men capable of barring Bonaparte's path to power, namely, Barras, Sieyès, General Bernadotte, and General Moreau." In twenty-four days Bonaparte succeeded in bluffing Barras out of his path, and in winning Sieyès and Moreau to his side. Bernadotte was the only prominent Frenchman who held aloof.

Why did Bernadotte hold aloof? His alliance with the Bonaparte family tended to draw him to Napoleon's side; and Napoleon showed himself ready to make and to meet advances. "If you wish to be one of the number of my friends," he said, "you will be very welcome." "Good friendship," replied Bernadotte, "is possible, but I believe that you will always be the most imperious of masters." Here we find confirmation of the happy observation of a French writer, that "*Ce que*

¹ *Bernadotte, The First Phase, Part IX, pp. 375-434.*

*Bernadotte va détester dans Napoléon, ce n'est pas l'homme mais le maître."*¹

Bernadotte was sincere in his attachment to Republican institutions. They had opened a career to his talents; and he easily came to the conclusion that a system which had been so good for the bee must be good for the whole hive. But the hive was of a different opinion. The majority of French citizens had discovered that political liberty had resulted in civil tyranny and in the negation of real freedom. In their distress they prayed for a Deliverer, and their prayer was answered when General Bonaparte unexpectedly returned from Egypt.

If the Directory had possessed the courage to act vigorously they might have struck an effective blow in self-defence. Bernadotte went so far as to offer to arrest the hero of the hour on a charge of deserting his Army, and of disembarking in France in breach of the quarantine laws. But the Government was not strong enough or bold enough to take such a decisive step. Napoleon, with the help of his brothers, then proceeded to cajole Bernadotte by inviting his co-operation in "defending and maintaining the Republic," and by extracting a promise that he would not harangue the troops or mount his horse without orders from some higher authority. On the day of the *coup d'état*,² while he waited in vain for some higher authority to give him a command, the Directorial Government was overthrown, and a provisional Consulate was established, in which Napoleon was the one strong man.³

From the point of view of legality Bernadotte was on the right side on this occasion, for the *coup d'état* of Brumaire was directed against the existing Constitution, and was carried out by trickery and violence. Yet

¹ A. Dry, *Soldats ambassadeurs sous le Directoire*.

² 9th November 1799.

³ *Bernadotte, The First Phase*, Chapters LXX-LXXIV, pp 435-468.

France was so sick of the Directory that she was content to shut her eyes to the illegality of Bonaparte's usurpation, and to heave a sigh of relief.

When Bonaparte had won the day, the leaders of the Opposition party fled to various hiding-places in order to escape the proscription and the penalties which were the usual sequel to a revolutionary *journée*. General Bernadotte, accompanied by his wife, who disguised herself as a boy, took refuge in the country house of a former brother-officer near the forest of Senart, so as to be able, if necessary, to conceal themselves in its recesses from Bonaparte's police. Thus it came about that, when this volume opens, Bernadotte, ex-General-in-Chief, ex-Ambassador, ex-Minister of State, leader of the anti-Bonapartist opposition, was a fugitive in hiding, while Bonaparte, as a result of the *coup d'état*, had made himself master of France.¹ Out of this strange situation there sprang up a life-long rivalry which showed itself fitfully as time went on, sometimes breaking out in open hostility, but more often mollified, on one side or the other, by services, favours, fellowship, or family influences.

¹ *Bernadotte, The First Phase*, Chapter LXXV, pp. 469-476.

CHAPTER II

THE CONSULATE AND THE COUNCIL OF STATE FEBRUARY-MARCH 1800

"C'est l'absorber."—*Sieyès' comment on Bernadotte's appointment as Councillor of State.*

THE immediate consequence of the *Coup d'état of Brumaire* was the overthrow of the Directory and the transfer of the Executive authority to a Provisional Consulate in which Napoleon Bonaparte and the ex-abbé Sieyès were the principal figures. In order to re-assure Republican opinion, the members of the new government took a solemn Oath on 12th November "to be faithful to the Republic." Upon the same day General Bernadotte left his hiding-place near the forest of Senart, and returned to Paris, having been assured by his brother-in-law, Joseph Bonaparte, that he might safely do so. The Provisional government adopted a policy of clemency, and before the end of December, a general pardon and amnesty was extended to all the proscribed members of Bernadotte's late party.

Bonaparte next set himself to win over the Opposition Generals. He began with Jourdan and Augereau, who had been Bernadotte's principal supporters in resisting the recent *coup d'état*. General Jourdan was appointed Inspector-General of Infantry; and General Augereau received the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Holland.¹

On Christmas Day 1799 was launched a new Constitution, the joint production of Bonaparte and of Sieyès, in which whatever was practical and vigorous was the former's handiwork. Sieyès' chief contribution was

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, Nos. 4397, 4475.

the principle of "Absorption," by which dangerous and ambitious men were to be absorbed into the Senate. Bonaparte accepted the principle, and immediately applied it to Sieyès, who was "absorbed" by receiving a Senatorship, a large sum of money, and the splendid national estate of Chroné. The ex-Abbé thenceforward lost all his mysterious prestige and influence, and we shall find Bernadotte afterwards referring to him contemptuously as "the Canon of Chroné."

The Head of the new Executive was to be styled First Consul, to hold office for ten years, and to have the power of appointment of Ministers Ambassadors, and all the principle officers of State. To Napoleon Bonaparte the post of First Consul fell by right of personal pre-eminence as well as by right of political conquest. As the Legislature was subordinated to the Executive and, as the Executive was concentrated in the hands of one ambitious man, the tendency was towards a thinly-veiled absolutism. Nevertheless the Constitution remained republican in theory, and Napoleon skilfully dissembled his designs behind a parliamentary scaffolding which consisted of three chambers bearing the popular titles of the Senate, the Legislative Body, and the Tribune.

The First Consul had no illusions about these Assemblies. He tolerated them on condition that they were to remain mere caricatures of that system of popular representation in which he had no belief. What he believed in and aspired to was a dictatorship; but, as he was not above taking advice, he devised a fourth body which became his favourite branch of the Constitution. This was the Council of State, in which all legislation and administration was to be initiated, with the result that it quickly assumed the place of the real workshop of government. It included the Consuls, the Ministers, and some forty nominated members.¹

¹ *Napoleon au Conseil d'Etat, St. Hilaire.*

While the new constitution was in the making, "Bernadotte," writes Lanfrey, "maintained an attitude of reserve, protected from Bonaparte's anger by his relationship with Joseph." Joseph had an eye to the main chance. He calculated that if anything should happen to the First Consul, who was his brother, Bernadotte, who was his brother-in-law, might turn out to be a friend in need. In pushing him forward he was protecting a possible protector.¹ The rest of the Bonaparte family were on Bernadotte's side. Lucien was his intimate friend and confidant. The Bonaparte sisters treated him as a brother. On 18th January we find him figuring as "best man" at Caroline's marriage to Murat, and as principal witness to the marriage register.² Fouché was also on his side, regarding him as a possible successor, in case of accident, to the Chief of the State.³ All these influences were at work to bring him back to public life. They accorded with Napoleon's inclinations. On the evening of his *coup d'état* he had declared his intention of "separating Bernadotte from his coteries."⁴ He now offered him a place on the new Council of State, and Bernadotte accepted the olive branch.

Eleven weeks had hardly elapsed since the Revolution of Brumaire. Bernadotte has been criticised for "rallying" too soon to the Consulate; but he was the last of the opposition leaders to do so. Generals Jourdan and Augereau had already accepted high commands; the proscribed Jacobins had already been amnestied; and Bonaparte had taken an oath of allegiance to the Republic, on the faith of which the overwhelming majority of republicans had already accepted the new Constitution. Besides, the Consulate was in theory and in form republican. The First Consul assumed a republican mask, and allowed two years to pass before he began to lay it aside.

¹ *Nap. et sa Famille*, i. 440.

² *Fouché par Madelin*, i. 84.

³ *Joachim Murat*, 453-455.

⁴ *Bernadotte, The First Phase*, 467.

Bernadotte was admitted to the Council of State on the 23rd January 1800, and was assigned to the Section of War, where he exhibited considerable independence.¹ He took his own line, as an ex-Minister of War, when the Council discussed the question of conscription; and when questions of European politics came on the tapis, he differed from the First Consul by advocating a defensive, as against an offensive, foreign policy. This was a renewal of an old controversy which they had debated in 1797 when campaigning together in Italy.² At the Council Bonaparte answered Bernadotte with characteristic conciseness. "Everything is defence," he exclaimed. "Even conquest which is the necessary consequence of war is defence."³ Here lay the essential difference between the attitude of these two men towards foreign affairs. Bernadotte would have been content with the traditional policy of the French Revolution, which was to maintain the "natural" boundaries of France, the Rhine, the Alps, the Pyrenees, and the Atlantic, and to flank them with bastions in the shape of allied republics in Holland, Switzerland, and Cisalpine Italy. Napoleon, on the other hand, cherished far more extensive aims. He aspired to predominate in both hemispheres and in all the continents. Yet he would have seriously argued that his aims were merely defensive.

The First Consul took the earliest opportunity of exacting from his new Councillor of State some unequivocal evidence of his adhesion to the new order of things. When a national plebiscite had confirmed the Consular constitution by an overwhelming vote, certain Councillors of State were commissioned to present the result to the new "Houses of Parliament," and Bernadotte was selected as one of them.⁴ This was a very clever move on Bonaparte's part, which had the effect

¹ Rambaud, *Revue Bleue*, January 1912.

² Bernadotte, *The First Phase*, 447. ³ Sorel, vi.22, 230.

⁴ *Journal de Paris*, An. 8, Vol. 45, 622, 630.



NAPOLEON BONAPARTE
FIRST CONSUL

of identifying "*l'homme obstacle*" in a solemn and public way with the Consular *régime*. Sieyès, whose thoughts were full of the subject of absorption, was heard to remark sententiously, "*C'est l'absorber.*"¹

After his appointment to the Council of State, Bernadotte remained in Paris for about three months. He appears to have busied himself in pressing upon the Government the claims of old friends. We find him interesting himself for General Vandamme,² with whom he had served on the Rhine; for General Ernouf, formerly Chief of the Staff of the Army of the Sambre and the Meuse; for an old comrade named Milliod, who had lost an arm; and for the family of General Championnet,³ who died in the early days of 1800. The letter which he wrote on behalf of General Ernouf may serve as an example. They are all in the same style:—

"GENERAL BERNADOTTE TO THE FIRST CONSUL.

"General Ernouf has served the cause of liberty ever since the commencement of the Revolution. He was already a General of Division at the Battle of Wattignies. At Fleurus he was Chief of the Staff of an Army of 70,000 men. I can testify that he contributed largely to the successes of the Army of the Sambre and Meuse. . . . I guarantee, General, that the Republic has no more sincere friend, and the Government no more zealous defender. I appeal on his behalf to your sense of justice and to your good feeling. There are few men, whatever his calumniators may say, who are more deserving.

BERNADOTTE."⁴

General Ernouf's attachment to "the Republic" and to "the cause of Liberty" were not likely to recommend him very favourably to Bonaparte; and his case went badly.

¹ Lafosse, 1, 250.

² *Vandamme*, par Du Casse, ii. 49.

³ *Catalogue of Morrison Autograph Letters*, series II, 172, 173 (letter of April 16, 1800).

⁴ *Revue de la Révolution*, vi. 26.

Bernadotte did not dissociate himself from the members of the late Government. He kept up friendly relations with the ex-Director, Gohier,¹ who, having been imprisoned and expelled from office, remained under the surveillance of Bonaparte's police. On 19th April, we find him inviting Gohier to dinner in a note in which he holds out, as an inducement, that they will have an opportunity of "chatting about the ingratitude of men" ("ils jaseront un instant sur l'ingratitude des hommes").² This was compromising company for a Councillor of State to keep, and he soon became the object of rumours, the circulators of which linked his name with that of one of the First Consul's own brothers. In March we find a Parisian leader of Society writing to her friend Thibaudeau that Lucien Bonaparte and Bernadotte were supposed to be implicated in a conspiracy, and that Talleyrand had spoken of the rumour as having some foundation.³ The story travelled to London, where Peltier, the anti-Bonapartist scribe, gave currency to the statement that Bernadotte and Lucien Bonaparte were involved in some plot against the Government. The same writer described Bernadotte as a "pronounced patriot and a zealous Jacobin, but an enemy of bloodshed, who united a fiery temperament with a heart which was naturally good," and added that "his high-flown imagination was mainly responsible for the extravagance of his political attitude."⁴

In April and May Lord Grenville, the English Foreign Minister, received information from one of his secret-service agents in Paris that a Jacobin conspiracy was on foot of which General Bernadotte was expected to become the head; that it was well known that every prominent French General thought himself as much

¹ See *Bernadotte, The First Phase*, 376.

² *Revue des Autographes*, Charavay, No. 50, page 11.

³ *Mémoires de Thibaudeau*, 1799-1815, 22, 23 (letter from Madame Devries, March 1800; *Moi de Melito* (Eng. Tr.), i, 323.

⁴ *Paris Pendant 1800*, Vol. xxvi, 523, 524.

entitled as Bonaparte to the Chief Place in the State; and that Bernadotte had been heard to say that he "saw no reason why he should not himself play the part of Alexander."¹ These reports need not be taken very seriously. Gossip of this kind was the natural outcome of the recent *coup d'état*. Whenever there was a conspiracy in the air, suspicion naturally pointed to the "obstacle man" of Brumaire; but there does not seem to be any ground for supposing that he had as yet aroused, or merited, distrust in high quarters. The voice of rumour was anticipating coming events.

¹ F. O. 27/56 (1800).

CHAPTER III

LA VENDEE AND MARENGO

APRIL-MAY 1800

"De toutes les missions la plus pénible."—*Bonaparte's description of the command of the Army of the West. April 1800.*

"If I fall, you will find yourself with 40,000 men at the gates of Paris. In your hands will be the fate of the Republic."—*Bonaparte to Bernadotte, May 1800.*

BERNADOTTE had hardly been in office for three months as Councillor of State when he began to weary of civilian employment and to hanker after the command of an Army. France was at war with Austria; and Bonaparte contemplated taking the field in person in order to win back the lost fruits of his former Italian campaigns. For constitutional reasons he was debarred from assuming command of his army so long as it was within the borders of the Republic. Accordingly he proposed to appoint a general to the interim command with the title of "Lieutenant of the First Consul." He offered the post to Bernadotte, whose appointment as Lieutenant of the First Consul was announced in the Parisian newspapers of 12th March;¹ but his restless ambition was suddenly diverted to a different object.

A second war-cloud appeared on the horizon. The English Channel was reported to be alive with cruisers, and an invasion of the west coast of France was believed to be imminent. The prospect of an independent command in a war of national defence had more attractions for Bernadotte, and seemed to offer better chances of distinction, than that of serving in Italy as Bonaparte's subordinate. In view of the threatened invasion of

¹ *La Clef des Cabinets*, 22 Vent., An. VIII, p. 9578 (12 March, 1800). 14

Brittany he offered his sword to the First Consul, who promptly took him at his word.¹

The Western Command included the district of La Vendée, which, as the result of its strenuous opposition to the tenets of the French Revolution, had been the scene of insurrection and of civil war until its "pacification" by General Hoche in 1795. Hoche's policy led to a Treaty and a truce, but left a deep-seated discontent seething under the surface. When Bonaparte became First Consul, the condition of affairs was so serious that we find him writing to Desaix: "On my arrival I found the Republic lost, La Vendée was at the gates of Paris, . . . Brest itself was threatened by the English."² Being too impatient to await the results of a process of gradual appeasement he first offered some bold and broad concessions, which were rejected, and then tried negotiations, which proved abortive. Finally he turned to a policy of repression which General Brune was appointed to carry out. The Constitution was suspended; military tribunals with power of life and death were instituted; coercion was ruthlessly applied.

This was the situation in the West of France when Bernadotte took up his new post. He anticipated a glorious opportunity of repelling a foreign invasion; but the First Consul was better informed. In announcing the change to General Brune he wrote on 18th April: "Of all the public employments the one which you have filled for the past three months is the most painful (de toutes les missions la plus pénible)."³

In obedience to instructions which were conveyed to him on 1st May, Bernadotte proceeded to Brittany and established his headquarters at Rennes. The disagreeable nature of his duties is reflected in his despatches, in which we find him reporting malicious

¹ *Bourrienne et ses Erreurs*, i. 7, 207; Alfred Rambaud in *Revue Bleue*, January 1912; *Clef du Cabinet*, 19th April 1800 (30^e Germinal, Ann. VIII).

² *Corr. de Nap.*, 4786.

³ *Ib.*, 4719.

outrages and conflagrations, the prevalence of spies in the seaports, and the activity of rebel bands and organisations; complaining of the political activities of the Vendean leaders, whom he described as "the eternal enemies of social order"; asking for increased powers; advising the maintenance of a state of siege; and reporting that a large portion of the peaceable inhabitants were of the same opinion.¹

The same story is told in the following passage, which we cite from a well-known history of the Consulate.

"The civil war, which the 'pacification' had appeased but had never extinguished, had burst forth again in the West. The flames had broken out in four places in the Vendée, on both banks of the lower Loire. . . . The Royalist leaders were masters of nearly all the rural districts in the twelve departments of the West, and had 40,000 men at their disposal in the beginning of 1800. They intercepted the communications between Paris and the seaports on the Channel and Atlantic coasts. . . . This insurrection, undertaken by its leaders in the name of royalty and religion, was, in the case of many of its partisans, a mere pretext for robbery and pillage. The Chouans were really nothing more than royalist brigands. 'Chouannery' was political brigandage. To hold up the public coaches, to plunder the *courriers*, to lay violent hands on the public moneys, to pull down trees of liberty, to burn archives, to strip the municipal officers, to carry away the arms belonging to the National Guards, to sack the houses of rich patriots, and of the purchasers of National property, to force people by violence to disclose hiding-places of their money, to murder landed proprietors, to burn their houses, such were their ordinary exploits."²

This passage reads like a summary of Bernadotte's despatches. It is no wonder that Bonaparte described the Western command as *de toutes les missions la plus*

¹ *Journal des Débats*, and *La Clef du Cabinet*—May and June, 1800, reprinted in *Bourrienne et ses Erreurs*, i.

² Corréard, *France sous le Consulat*, 27, citing Sorel and Taine.

pénible. Bernadotte does not appear to have exercised his powers with undue severity. An officer of his army says that the inhabitants were "at first alarmed at the appointment of a general who had been described to them as a famous patriot; but they were agreeably surprised by seeing in all his actions that he was as rigid in maintaining discipline, as he was attentive in healing the wounds occasioned by the civil wars, which had desolated this part of France."¹ In the *Memoirs of Bourrienne*² it is stated that General Bernadotte's "conciliatory disposition, his chivalrous manners, his inclination to mercy, and a happy mixture of prudence and firmness, made him succeed where others would have failed. He finally established good order and submission to the laws." To the same effect is the historical judgment of Thibaudeau, no friend of Bernadotte, who gives him credit for putting "a finishing touch to the pacification of the West."³

Bernadotte was certainly not encouraged to act with lenity by the orders which reached him from the First Consul. Georges Cadoudal, the Vendean peasant leader, was the special object of Napoleon's wrath. On 4th June Napoleon wrote, "Seize that wretch, Georges Cadoudal, dead or alive." In subsequent letters we find him saying: "Have the miserable Georges hunted and shot within twenty-four hours." "Georges is one of those who behaves worst, seize him and shoot him." "Rid us of this miserable Georges."⁴ These grim and peremptory instructions make it evident that the Command in the West was in danger of degenerating into a police hunt after Royalist rebels. Georges escaped, but one of his lieutenants was caught and executed in the following year.

It was during the summer of 1800 that Bernadotte had to deal with the English descent at Quiberon,

Sarrasin, *Phil.*, ii. 206, *et seq.* ¹ *Bourrienne*, v. 4. ² Thibaudeau, i. 166.

⁴ *Corr. de Nap.*, Nos. 4877, 4968, 4974, 4991.

which was the most serious of the incidents of that kind that occurred during the Consulate. According to his despatches, less than 1,500 English troops landed at Quiberon, but had re-embarked before he reached the place with a force of 4,000 men.¹

While Bernadotte was occupied with the comparatively inglorious tasks of civil repression and coast defence, the First Consul was preparing to cross swords with Austria in a campaign upon the success of which his future destiny was staked. Before leaving the capital he sent a farewell message to Bernadotte which showed a surprising confidence in the "obstacle man" of the recent *coup d'état*. It ran as follows: "I am going to fling myself once more into the hazards of war. We do not know how it may turn out. If I fall, you will find yourself with 40,000 men at the gates of Paris. In your hands will be the fate of the Republic."²

Why was Napoleon content, on the eve of this critical enterprise, to leave France and its capital at the mercy of his most dangerous rival? Perhaps he was thinking of his own family and of the risks which they ran in the event of his fall. In that contingency what would become of his mother and of his brothers and sisters? His phenomenal rise had carried them with him to a perilous eminence, which exposed them to jealousy because it was not justified by any personal merits or achievements of their own. They were by no means blind to the insecurity of their position. Lucien, writing to Joseph at the end of this campaign, observed: "As for us, if the Battle of Marengo had closed the First Consul's career, we should now have been proscribed." Bernadotte was Joseph's brother-in-law, and was the intimate friend of Lucien, Elisa, Caroline, and Pauline. He was one of the few generals who enjoyed any political prestige or following. Under his wing the

¹ *Moniteur*, An. VIII, p. 1002; letter to Vandamme, *Vandamme*, ii. 96, 97.

² *Sarrans*, i. 42.



GEORGES CADOU DAL
Vendean Patriot



GENERAL HOCHÉ
The Pacifier of La Vendée

Bonaparte family would be safe. Here we have a reasonable explanation of Napoleon's strange complacency at leaving Bernadotte at the gates of Paris with a large army under his command, while he himself was putting his fortunes to the touch to win or lose them all.

The First Consul displayed his usual rapidity of movement. He left Paris at the beginning of May, and finished the campaign on 4th June by a decisive battle on the historic plain of Marengo. The battle was remarkable for its surprising variations. It was lost at three o'clock in the afternoon, when the Austrian Commander had left the field believing himself to be the victor. Suddenly there came to the rescue a scattered French detachment under the heroic Desaix, in response to Napoleon's feverish message: "Revenez, au nom de Dieu!" The battle was renewed about 5 p.m., and with the opportune aid of an irresistible charge by young Kellerman's four hundred cavalry sabres, was won before sunset at the sacrifice of Desaix's valuable life. With it was won the best part of Italy.

The victory of Marengo drove Paris mad with joy. Rumours of defeat had reached the capital in the first instance. The political doves were in a flutter until the news of a decisive success arrived on 21st June. There had been no such evocation of popular enthusiasm since the early spasms of the revolutionary fever had died away. For two days the capital gave itself up to the intoxication of national exultation.¹ Bonaparte's success had the effect of consolidating his authority and of enhancing his popularity. His ambition received a fresh stimulus, and from this moment marched apace. Thenceforward he grew more autocratic and overbearing in his attitude towards his former comrades, and less disposed to humour or conciliate men of independence like Bernadotte. On his return he questioned his familiars as to the persons who, when rumours of

¹ Vandal, *L'Avènement de Bonaparte* ii. 426 et seq.

disaster were circulating in Paris, had been designated as his possible successors. He was supplied with a list which included Bernadotte. The one that had found most favour had been that of Carnot, the celebrated "organiser of victory,"¹ whom the First Consul took an early opportunity of removing from the Ministry of War. No importance was attached to the gossip about Bernadotte, who had been absent from Paris, and could not have been mixed up in any political intrigue. Nevertheless, the relations between the two men were not likely to be improved by the discovery that his name had figured in such a list.

¹ *Miol de Melilo*, i, 340, 341.

CHAPTER IV

CERACCHI, MURAT, AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE

SEPTEMBER–DECEMBER 1800

"Upon the day on which Bernadotte is preferred to me, I shall hand in my resignation."—*Murat to Joseph Bonaparte, November 1800.*

Like Antony, he (General Bernadotte) would have presented to the excited people the blood-stained robe of Caesar."—*Bonaparte after his escape from assassination, on 24th December 1800.*

WE have now arrived at a period, covering the autumn and winter of 1800, when a series of incidents followed each other in quick succession, which served to render Bernadotte dissatisfied and to cause him to be distrusted.

Mutiny having broken out in September at Tours in the 52nd Regiment, Bernadotte sent orders to General Liébert, the local Commandant, to assemble the regiment in the principal square of the city, and to have the ringleaders pointed out, and sent before a military tribunal. Having given these orders he sent his report to the Minister of War. In the margin of the report the First Consul directed Bourrienne to write the following minute: "General Bernadotte has acted wrongly in taking such severe measures against the 52nd Regiment, not having the requisite means of enforcing order, in the centre of a town where the garrison is insufficient to keep the mob in check." Bourrienne says that Bonaparte "desired a pretext for blaming Bernadotte."¹ At all events Bernadotte, whose orders were carried out successfully, was deeply hurt by this hasty condemnation which events proved not to have been justified, and was not mollified by the following

¹ Bourrienne, v, 5.

letter which the First Consul wrote to him on the 2nd October: "I have read with interest, Citizen General, what you have done to restore order in the 52nd Regiment, also a report of General Liébert of the 5th Vendémiaire (27th September). Express to that officer the satisfaction of the Government." Bernadotte never forgot the affront, and referred to it in a memorandum which he wrote many years afterwards giving his account of the events leading up to and following the 18th Brumaire.¹

About the same time, information reached the First Consul of a conspiracy directed against his life in which one of the principal actors was a young sculptor of considerable promise named Ceracchi, among whose sitters had been several distinguished generals, including Berthier, Bernadotte, and Brune. The plot culminated in the arrest of the implicated persons at the Opera on 10th October.

In the course of the magisterial enquiry one of the witnesses deposed that Ceracchi had been heard to say that he expected to get money from General Bernadotte, and upon a subsequent occasion to declare that he had received money from that source.² As Bernadotte was in Brittany, inquiries were made of Madame Bernadotte, who stated that Ceracchi had originally declined to receive any remuneration for his bust of her husband, but had recently applied for payment. It was in compliance with this request that Bernadotte sent him from Rennes a draft upon the War Office for 1,200 francs in discharge of the debt.

Nobody doubted that Madame Bernadotte's explanation was the true one. The bust was in existence, and the fee was a reasonable one. Besides, it passed belief that any sane man would have hired a conspirator

¹ *Note Historique sur le 18th Brumaire.*

² *Procès contre Demerville, Ceracchi et autres, Paris, An., XI (1800), pp. 30, 63.*

to murder the First Consul by means of a draft payable through the War Office. Nevertheless, the incident did not improve Bernadotte's position at Court, because the prisoners' depositions, while exculpating him from any knowledge of their proceedings, made it clear that he was regarded as one of the Republican Generals in favour of whom the conspiracy would have operated if it had been successful. The names of Masséna and of Lannes were mentioned in the same connection.¹

While these events were developing, Bernadotte wrote the following letter from Rennes on 29th September, applying for leave :—

“ GENERAL BERNADOTTE TO GENERAL BONAPARTE, FIRST CONSUL.

“ GENERAL—Joseph has already informed me that you approve of my going to Paris for some days to attend to business affairs which require my presence. The tranquillity which, in spite of the efforts of a crowd of traitors, reigns in this part of the country, will enable me to give you orally some idea of their proceedings. I beg of you, General, to sign the enclosed permit, and to believe in the frank friendship which binds me to you. I salute you respectfully, BERNADOTTE.”²

Bernadotte arrived in Paris in mid-October,³ his object being to obtain the command of an army which was being organised for active service in Italy under the name of the Army of Reserve. He had missed being at Marengo by neglecting a similar opportunity. The First Consul was willing to satisfy his ambition, and went so far as to nominate him and to offer the Western Command to Murat as his successor. The affair was practically settled, and the Paris newspapers announced

¹ *Procès contre Demerville, Ceracchi et autres*, 62, 65, 67, 68, 70, 269, 293.

² *Bourrienne et ses Erreurs*, i. 228.

³ *La Clef du Cabinet*, 25 Vend., 2 Brum., An. IX (17th and 24th October 1800).

Bernadotte's appointment to the command of the Army intended to operate in Italy.¹ At the last moment came a slip 'twixt the cup and lip. Murat, who was indignant at the idea of being supplanted by Bernadotte, wrote the following letter, dated 1st November to Joseph Bonaparte:—

"GENERAL MURAT TO CITIZEN JOSEPH BONAPARTE.

"MY DEAR JOSEPH—Lucien has left (*i.e.*, for Madrid). A thousand absurd rumours are current about the motive of his departure. Louis is also absent and they wish to get rid of me also. The First Consul has proposed—would you believe it possible?—to appoint me to the command of the Army of the West, and he has done so, because he wished to give the Army of Reserve, which had been destined for me, to Bernadotte. I have refused point blank, and upon the day on which Bernadotte is preferred to me, I shall hand in my resignation. I shall never endure tranquilly the spectacle of power passing into the hands of the man who on the 18th Brumaire was on the side of those who voted outlawry against our family.

"JOACHIM MURAT."²

This vigorous protest put an end to Bernadotte's chances. The First Consul gave way, and Murat's appointment to the command of the Army of Reserve was gazetted before the end of November.

Bernadotte met with another disappointment when war was declared against Portugal, and he found himself passed over for the command of the Army of Portugal in favour of another brother-in-law of the First Consul, General Le Clerc. Le Clerc was a general of the second or third rank. He bore a pale resemblance to the First Consul, and imitated his gestures and mannerism with such success that he had been nicknamed "the blonde Bonaparte." In 1797 he had

¹ *La Clef du Cabinet*, 7 Brum., An. IX (29th Oct.); *Journal des Débats*, 8 Brum. (30th Oct.).

² *Corr. de Murat*, 32, 33.

married the beautiful Pauline, the favourite sister of the First Consul, and he was now reaping his reward for the prominent part which he had taken in carrying out the *coup d'état* of Brumaire.

Bernadotte now addressed a letter to Joseph Bonaparte in which he pressed his claim to be appointed to some foreign command, and said that his recent nomination as Lieutenant of the First Consul, and his often expressed objection to his present post, gave him reason to hope that he would not be sent back to the West. He added that he had already explained his wishes to the First Consul, who had expressed his concurrence and had congratulated him upon his wish to make war on a larger scale. He asked Joseph to request the First Consul to give him some other appointment; and expressed his anxiety to leave Paris. "The political parties," he writes, "begin to agitate; clubs are being formed, the royalists are numerous, and an opposition to them is being organised. Paris is a sewer in which all the impurities and corruptions find a refuge. Help me, I conjure you, my dear Joseph, to escape from Paris in some honourable way."¹ Paris was indeed a perilous place for Bernadotte, because he was one of the men who was regarded as most likely to benefit by the overthrow of the existing constitution, or by the removal of the First Consul.

That Bonaparte himself was beginning to regard Bernadotte as a possible successor was made evident by a remark which he dropped on Christmas Eve 1800, after his assassination had been attempted by the explosion of bombs when he was driving to the opera. The outrage, sometimes spoken of as "the affair of the infernal machine," was of Royalist origin, and Bernadotte was free from any suspicion of complicity in it or of

¹ *Morrison Collection of Autograph Letters.* The letter is dated in 1801 by Masson in *Napoleon et sa Famille*, but it appears to have been written in the winter of 1800.

sympathy with it. The First Consul discussed very coolly at his own house on the same evening what would have happened if he had been killed. Some of those present said that General Moreau would have succeeded him. "No," said Bonaparte, "it would have been General Bernadotte. Like Antony, he would have presented to the excited people the blood-stained robe of Caesar." Madame de Stael when referring to this incident adds the following comment: "I do not know whether Bonaparte really believed that France would have called General Bernadotte to the head of affairs; but I am quite sure that he said so for the purpose of exciting envy against that General."¹

The position between these two men in December 1800 was that Bernadotte was grumbling at being left at his odious post in La Vendée, while Bonaparte was representing him as being ready, in the event of his own assassination, to act the part which Mark Antony played after the death of Cæsar.

¹ *Ten Years Exile*, 33.

CHAPTER V

A PROJECTED INVASION OF ENGLAND IN 1801—MORE DISAPPOINTMENTS

JANUARY 1801—APRIL 1802

"If my hope of an active command is disappointed, I shall depart for our dominions across the seas, in order to seek that happiness which is denied me in my own country by men who owe me justice and recognition."—*Bernadotte to Lucien Bonaparte, 20th February 1801.*

"If that wrong-headed southerner, Bernadotte, continues to rail at the acts of my government, instead of giving him the command which he seeks, I shall have him shot in the square of the Carrousal."—*Napoleon to Joseph Bonaparte in 1801.*

AT the beginning of 1801 Bernadotte returned to his uncongenial post in Brittany. The following Order of the Day affords evidence that he exerted himself to inspire his Republican troops with fraternal feelings towards the Royalists of La Vendée :

"Soldiers of the Army of the West, you have fought with me in Germany. You invariably respected the Germans, and their property. In Italy, your enemies were forced to admire the order and discipline you always observed. In France you must not carry desolation into the bosom of those families, whose children were covered with glory on the plains of Marengo under the First Consul Bonaparte. Do not believe those pretended patriots, who seek to embitter you against those brother soldiers, who thought themselves obliged both by honour and duty to fight in defence of the throne and the Altar. Peace happily is restored, every illusion is dissipated ; there are no longer either Chouans or Vendéans. We are all Frenchmen.

"BERNADOTTE."¹

¹ *Sarrasin, Phil.*, ii.

To this order of the day was joined a regulation, which severely punished any individual of the Army who should allow himself to harass the inhabitants in the smallest way.

In the Spring and Summer of 1801 Bernadotte's hopes of active employment took another direction. The Peace of Luneville between France and Austria, which was signed on 7th February, deprived England of her only remaining Continental ally, and left her face to face with France. It was believed on both sides of the Channel that France would take advantage of the occasion by declaring war against England; and Bernadotte aspired to the command of the French Army in this campaign. A letter of his to Lucien Bonaparte, dated 20th February 1801, exhibits the writer's frame of mind:—

"MY DEAR LUCIEN,—I have wished for a long time to seize the opportunity of writing to you, and I avail myself of one which has been offered to me by your sister Eliza. . . . I await the dissolution of the active armies, when I shall know for certain whether I am to take the field in command of the army which is destined for the campaign against England. If my hope is disappointed, I shall depart for our dominions across the seas, in order to seek that happiness, which is denied me in my own country by men who owe me justice and recognition. Farewell, my dear Lucien. Your happiness is the wish of my heart. Count on my unalterable friendship, which is independent of all human events. I embrace you.

"J. B. BERNADOTTE."¹

Corroboration of the contents of this letter is to be found in the following extract from a confidential report from a British Agent in Paris which is preserved in our Foreign Office State Papers: "The party of the opposition is by no means dead. Moreau, Masséna

¹ *Lucien Bonaparte et ses Mémoires*, Jung. iii, 106, 107.

and Bernadotte can always be counted on. Bernadotte recently said to a friend, 'The present Government cannot meet my wishes. If we continue to fall out, I shall ask the Government of the United States of America for a grant of land, and we shall go there to found a colony of free men.' " ¹

In May the English Government received information from a Correspondent in Paris, to the effect that two expeditions were being planned against England, and that Bernadotte and Masséna were to command them.² In July they were informed that Bonaparte intended to employ upon this dangerous service the Generals whom he distrusted for political reasons. Masséna was to have the chief command. Augereau was to lead the right wing and Bernadotte the left wing. The writer added that these generals were persons whom Bonaparte "dislikes for personal reasons and is anxious to sacrifice." The main attack was to be directed on the coast of Essex, while feints were to be made on the coasts of Kent and Sussex.³ These confidential reports derived confirmation, when the Paris newspapers in July announced an expedition against England to be led by Masséna, Augereau, Lannes, and Bernadotte.⁴ Bernadotte's hopes were now centred upon the expected campaign against England. On 17th June he wrote to the First Consul: "I continue to rely upon the assurance which you have given me that you will summon me to the Command of the Army of England, when you form it. You will find in me obedience and attachment."⁵ This letter was followed by another to the same effect: "I beg of you to remember that my eagerness to repair to Brest, under similar circumstances

¹ F. O. 27/58 (Endorsed "*Communications from M. Duthiel, April 18th 1801*").

² *Ib.*, dated 11th May 1801.

³ F. O. 27/58 (Document endorsed "*most secret July 10th 1801*").

⁴ *Journal des Débats*, 23rd and 28th July 1801.

⁵ *Bourviennet et ses Erreurs*, i. 227.

last year, lost me the command of the Army of Italy to which you had intended to appoint me. I hope that your good intentions will not be frustrated in respect of the command which you have been so kind as to promise me. Believe me, General that my attachment equals that respect which I entertain for you."¹

It is evident that on both sides of the Channel the campaign against England was thought to be imminent in June and July 1801. A correspondent wrote to our Foreign Office in July: "It seems certain that the invasion of England will be attempted in the course of a month from this date."² But the "certainty" did not come off. Negotiations between the French and English Governments resulted in the signature of Preliminaries of Peace on 1st October.

Bernadotte's thoughts now turned to the West Indies, where an opportunity presented itself, which he grasped at ineffectually. This was the French expedition to St. Domingo. St. Domingo loomed very large in the eyes of the Frenchmen of that day. It stood to France in very much the same relation that India stands to the British Empire to-day. The object of the expedition was to re-establish French authority in the island, and it was expected to emulate the glory of Napoleon's famous campaign in Egypt. Bernadotte exerted all the influence that he could bring to bear upon the First Consul, in order to obtain this command, and he was deeply disappointed when it fell to General Le Clerc, who thus supplanted him for the second time within twelve months. His disappointment was so notorious that we find that our English Foreign Office was informed by a Paris Correspondent that General Lannes' dissatisfaction with the Government was increased "by his failure to obtain for his friend, General

¹ *Bourrienne et ses Erreurs*, 220, 227.

² F.O. 27/58 (unsigned secret document dated 10th July 1801).

Bernadotte, the command of the San Domingo expedition." ¹

In November 1801 General Le Clerc and his wife (Pauline Bonaparte) passed through Rennes on their way to Brest, where they were to embark for St. Domingo, and were the guests of General Bernadotte at his headquarters on 17th November. After Pauline had retired, an animated scene occurred between the two Generals, in the course of which Bernadotte gave free vent to his annoyance.² Le Clerc reported the incident to Bonaparte, with the result that Bernadotte was recalled to the capital.

Before leaving Rennes, which he did on 19th November 1801, Bernadotte issued an Order of the Day to his army which further incensed Bonaparte. He announced the peace which had just been concluded, and added: "Let every soldier who returns to the bosom of his family carry back with him the example of those civil virtues which have been the source of so many military prodigies. Peace restores you to a life of greater ease. Preserve in your homes the memory of your victories, and never forget that it was the inspiration of liberty that has illumined your past. You can preserve your glory, but you will find it difficult to increase it." ³ In view of the humiliating nature of the police duties, in which this army had been engaged for nearly two years, this address was a somewhat pretentious declaration. The writer's mind was in a state of ferment, and this was its effervescence. But its grandiloquence was not the ground upon which it was objected to by the Government. It was the reference to the "inspiration of liberty" which gave offence, because it was taken as reflection upon the advance which Bonaparte was beginning to make towards personal rule.

¹ F. O. 1801 27/61 (despatch from Mr. Jackson endorsed "secret and separate by his servant").

² Masson, *Napoléon et sa Famille*, ii. 92.

³ *Ib.*

Joseph Bonaparte, in a letter to his brother Lucien, gives an account of a significant conversation, which appears to have occurred at this period. When Joseph was pressing Bernadotte's claims for an active command, the First Consul retorted: "Be well assured that if that wrong-headed southerner continues to rail at the acts of my Government, instead of giving him the command which he seeks, I shall have him shot in the Square of the Carrousal." "Is that a message which you ask me to convey to him?" said Joseph. "No," said the First Consul, "it is a hint which I offer to you as his friend and brother-in-law, so that you may advise him to be more prudent."¹

In the winter of 1801-1802 the First Consul offered Bernadotte the post of Ambassador at Constantinople; and having failed to induce him to go to Turkey, wrote to Joseph on 7th January the following letter proposing the Captain-Generalship of Guadeloupe, a less important command than that of St. Domingo:—

"MY DEAR JOSEPH,—I think General Bernadotte has gone to Amiens. Whether he is there or not, I wish you would find out whether he would like to go to Guadeloupe as Captain-General. . . . It is an important mission, and agreeable from every point of view. There is glory to be won, and a great service to be rendered to the Republic in reducing that island to permanent order. Besides, Guadeloupe is a base from which possession can be taken of Louisana and also of Martinique and of St. Lucia. If this tempts Bernadotte's ambitions let me know at once, because the expedition will go in Pluviose (21st January-19th February), and these Colonial missions are sought after by the generals of the highest reputation.
BONAPARTE."²

The secret reports received by the British Foreign Office in the winter of 1801 and 1802, refer to the

¹ *Lucien Bonaparte et ses mémoires*, ii. 107, 108.

² *Corr. de Nap.*, 5916; *Roi Joseph*, i. 215.

appointment of Bernadotte to the command of Guadeloupe as well as of the Isles of France and Bourbon, and attribute it to Bonaparte's desire to get rid of him by giving him a distant employment.¹ Bernadotte's ambition was not tempted, and the post fell to General Richepanse, who arrived at Guadeloupe only to die of Yellow Fever a few months afterwards. When this offer came to him, Bernadotte appears to have been with Joseph Bonaparte, who was peace-making with Lord Cornwallis at Amiens. On this occasion Joseph is said to have yielded to the temptation of speculating on the Bourse in view of the impending peace, and to have involved himself and Bernadotte in losses from which the First Consul rescued them both.² One of the consequences of the Peace of Amiens was the dissolution of the Army of the West, which was suppressed by a decree of 13th April 1802, and placed upon a peace footing. Bernadotte's painful mission was at an end,³ but he was deeply chagrined at his failure to obtain any acceptable command; nor was he satisfied when the First Consul allowed him to retain the title and emoluments of a General-in-Chief, thus placing him under an obligation without giving him any opportunity for distinction.

¹ F. O. 27/53 (letter endorsed "secret intelligence").

² So far as Bernadotte is concerned this story rests on the evidence of a letter of the Count de Semonville, who bore the reputation of a timeserver, written in 1816 when it was fashionable at the Court of the Bourbons to decry Bernadotte (see Pingaud, 58 n.). According to this letter Bonaparte represented Bernadotte "as an actor who makes up as a Roman and utters fine phrases about liberty, honour, and glory, but has all the instincts of a *garçon de théâtre* and will always be the same." This sounds very like what we should expect Bonaparte to have said.

³ Bernadotte returned to Paris in Jan. 1802, *Journal des Débats* Jan. 26, 1802, (10 Pluviose An X).

CHAPTER VI

BERNADOTTE'S HOME LIFE 1801-1802

"I perceive that I am giving thee too much advice, so I stop and kiss thee on the lips."—*Bernadotte to his wife Désirée, May 1801.*

LET us turn aside in order to catch some glimpses of Bernadotte's home life in 1801. The Bernadottes occupied a *maisonette* in the Rue Cisalpine in the outskirts of Paris. The household consisted of the General, his wife, Désirée, and their only child, Oscar, who was then hardly two years old. Désirée was the younger sister of Madame Joseph Bonaparte, at whose country chateau, called Morfontaine, the Bernadottes were frequent guests. Here the two sisters presided over a large circle which centred round the Clary family to which they belonged. Some letters of Bernadotte addressed to his wife in May and June 1801, the third year of their married life, have been preserved. Their tone is tender and affectionate, occasionally a little paternal, for he was the elder by fourteen years. He was anxious to see her shine in society, and was perhaps too exacting in persuading her to fit herself by study and perseverance for the high position to which they had attained, and for the still greater things to which he unceasingly aspired.

In May we find Bernadotte writing the following letter on behalf of his old comrade, General Ernouf, who had incurred enmity in high quarters, and was in danger of being retired on half pay :

"RENNES, 16 *Floreal*, An. IX.

"(6th May 1801).

"I send thee, my darling, a copy of the letter which



DÉSIRÉE CLARY
Married to Bernadotte 1798
Maréchale 1804
Princess of Ponte Corvo 1806
Princess Royal of Sweden 1810
Queen of Sweden and Norway 1818

I have written to Joseph on behalf of Ernouf. . . . Thou canst judge of the deep interest which I take in Ernouf's affair, when I go so far as to trouble thee about it. By taking this opportunity of reminding Joseph of it, his attention will be drawn to it, and success will result. I know thy invincible dislike of asking favours; but, my darling, General Ernouf's position is so critical, that, if this opportunity of helping him is lost, it will be very difficult to find such another. I beg of thee, as thou lovest me, to go to Morfontaine as soon as thou receivest this letter, if Joseph is not in Paris, and persuade him to speak to his brother, or at all events to write to him. It would be better if he could see him. He would certainly succeed by doing so. Since I left home I have not received a line from thee. I shall become jealous if thou continuest to be so neglectful. . . . I wish thee plenty of gaiety, and with it plenty of good sense. My love for thee will last as long as the existence of J. BERNADOTTE."

"P.S.—I am curious to know what masters you have engaged." ¹

Désirée complied, and her efforts were crowned with success. Ernouf was appointed to an Inspectorship in the Army of Italy, and Bernadotte wrote on 14th May thanking his wife for the trouble which she had taken. He added:

"I am delighted (*je suis aux anges*) to see that thou hast at last decided to take dancing lessons. Thou wilt please me much by going on with thy music lessons. Then thou wilt be divine. Chiappe visits thee very early. But I know his friendship for me, his high character, and thy dignified reserve, and I feel no anxiety. Good-bye, my dear little one, I embrace thee as I love thee, and that is very tenderly.

"J. BERNADOTTE." ²

¹ *Désirée Clary*, par D'Armaillé, 96.

² *Désirée Clary*, par d'Armaillé, 98.

Let us proceed to pry into some other letters from Bernadotte to Désirée, which speak for themselves :—

“ PONTIVY, *the 6th Prairial Year IX.*

“ (26th May 1801).

“ MY LOVE,—I long to know, my darling, if thou hast decided to wean Oscar. He seems to me to be old enough to bear the change. But thou art fully at liberty to take whatever course thy short experience and thy affection for him tell thee is best. The wish to preserve unblemished his sweet little face should make thee think of vaccination, but on this point, as on the last one, do what thou thinkest best. I am under obligations to General Truguet. He acts like an obliging colleague. He is a handsome, agreeable bachelor, worthy to be the escort of a young lady. It is folly to torment thyself. Thou art young and should amuse thyself. My affection and my advice should make thee reasonable. The springtime of life passes like a shadow, and the winter with its icicles overtakes us only too soon.

“ If Bonaparte does not send me to Flanders, I shall remind him of his promise, and, if nothing unforeseen happens, thou canst come to me for a month. In spite of my desire to see thee, I am very anxious that thou shouldst give the finishing touches to thy education. Accomplishments such as dancing and music are very essential. I recommend some lessons from M. Montel. I perceive that I am giving thee too much advice, so I stop and kiss thee on the lips. Thy lover,

“ J. BERNADOTTE.”¹

Bernadotte's next letter (28th May) complains of silence, and then returns to the subject of his wife's education :—

“ Thou dost not say anything of thy progress in dancing, music, and other accomplishments. When I

¹ *Ib.*, 100.

am far away I like to know that my little one is benefiting by the lessons she is taking. Good-bye, I kiss thee on the eyes—do the same to Oscar from me. Thy lover,
J. BERNADOTTE."¹

Désirée seems to have been piqued by her husband's importunities upon the subject of music and dancing lessons, and to have given expression to her feelings, for, on 7th June, we find him writing:—

"PONTIVY, le 18 Prairial, An. IX.

"(7th June 1801).

"I have yet to know, my dear Désirée, what there was that was severe in my letter of the 6th Prairial (26th May) of which thou complainest in thy last. I had no thought in it or in any of my letters than to speak the language of a sincere and true lover. I do not wish to treat thee like a child, but as a loving and sensible wife. All that I say should give thee that assurance. I think as thou dost about the accomplishments. They are acquired slowly, and the effort is irksome. Nevertheless, with a little patience and determination, one can succeed, when one has not passed one's fifth lustre. Write me often and tell me that thou lovest me. I embrace thee tenderly. J. B."²

Thenceforward Bernadotte seems to have given up the attempt to stimulate Désirée to cultivate social accomplishments. For himself, he steadily devoted himself to self-education and self-improvement both by the study of books and by the employment of competent teachers. He always seemed to be preparing himself for some higher destiny. We shall find an interesting example of these habits of self-education before the end of this chapter. Perhaps there was another explanation of his eagerness that Désirée should excel in dancing. It was at this time that he became acquainted with Madame Récamier, who was noted for her sweet and well-trained voice as well as for the singular grace of her movements. But there was no use in asking pretty

¹ *Désirée Clary*, par d'Armaillé, 102. ² *Ib.*, 103.

Désirée to imitate the queenly Juliette. As well ask a dove to arch its neck like a swan.

When on active service Bernadotte's nearest friends and companions were his Staff Officers and Aides-de-Camp. His Chief of the Staff was General Simon, of whom we shall hear again, and among his Staff Officers were Gérard and Maison, future Marshals of France, Villatte and Maurin, future Generals of Division. These were comrades of long standing who had been attached to him in most of his campaigns and employments.

Among Bernadotte's Aides-de-Camp were the brothers Adolphe and Marcellin de Marbot, the younger of whom was the author of the popular *Memoirs of Marbot*. Bernadotte, having been an intimate friend of their father, General Marbot,¹ had become guardian for his sons. Upon his appointment to the command of the Army of the West, he offered them positions on his Staff. Adolphe, the elder, was in a military college preparing for a scientific branch of the service; Marcellin, the younger, was an Hussar Officer. Adolphe threw up his studies, entered the infantry, and was prompt in presenting himself to Bernadotte, who at once appointed him his Aide-de-Camp. When Marcellin arrived, he found himself forestalled by his elder brother. There was no post left vacant on the General's Staff, except an extra-Aide-de-Campship, which was, comparatively speaking, an irksome ill-paid post. Marcellin was deeply annoyed, for he had refused an offer of a place on Masséna's Staff in order to accept one on Bernadotte's. He complained that the General had awarded the Aide-de-Campship as if it were a prize in a race. Bernadotte appears to have acted on two good old rules, "*Seniores priores*," and "First come first served." Marcellin de Marbot soon obtained a transfer into a cavalry regiment serving in Spain. He never forgave Bernadotte for preferring his elder brother. He

¹ Bernadotte, *The First Phase*, 296, 377, 404.

considered that his career had been injuriously affected, and he showed his bitter recollection of the incident in the tone of more than one passage in his book.

An amusing anecdote, illustrative of the ceaseless self-education by which Bernadotte gradually made himself an exceptionally well-informed man, has been told by a member of his staff. One day at dinner the conversation turned upon geography, the study of which Bernadotte recommended to his hearers. "I'll wager," he said, "that none of you know the history, geography, and statistics of Malta." Malta was much in evidence at the time, because it was a bone of contention between France and England. An aide-de-camp ventured to say that he was aware that Malta was an island in the Mediterranean, situated between Sicily and Africa, and that it was once ruled by an Order of knights. "Add," exclaimed Bernadotte with much animation, "that it was given to them by Charles V; that it is eight leagues in length, and five in breadth; that it is rocky, covered with earth which had to be imported from other countries; that it is protected by impregnable fortifications; that it was surrendered to the French in 1798; that it is fertile in oranges, lemons, melons, vines, pomegranates, apricots, honey, cotton, and variegated mosses; that it has a population of 8,800, who speak Italian, French, modern Greek, and Arabic; and that its climate is always clear and serene. These, my young friends, are a few elementary facts which should be learned in the nursery, and which it is unpardonable for young officers to be ignorant of. I advise you to attend to your studies." The aide-de-camp and his brother officers remained stupefied by this display of erudition, until one of them, having reason to go to the General's apartments, found on his table an open book, written by a Professor of Rennes from whom the General was receiving instruction, which contained all the information that had fallen from him, just as he had repeated it.

CHAPTER VII

BERNADOTTE'S SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT 1801-1802

"Bernadotte looked astonishingly like all the portraits of the great Condé."—MADAME DE GENLIS.

"The true hero of his age."—MADAME DE STAEL.

"My relations with Bernadotte date from an event too serious and too sad ever to be forgotten. The services which he rendered me at that time can never be effaced from the tablets of my memory."
—MADAME RÉCAMIER.

BERNADOTTE'S striking appearance, his animation and facility of expression in conversation, his charm and vivacity of manner, and the prestige which attached to his career, made him a notable figure in the society of his day. Among his comrades-in-arms he had enemies such as Davout and Berthier, but there were others who were attached to him, such as Ney, Moreau, Lannes, and Lefebvre. Of his friends none were more intimate than Napoleon's brothers and sisters, who admitted him to their family circle, and frequently sided with him in his differences with their imperious brother. In general society he made a favourable impression which is testified to in the writings of Madame de Stael, Madame Récamier, and Madame de Genlis. Madame de Genlis, who knew what was best of the old and the new *régime*, wrote of him: "Bernadotte looked astonishingly like all the portraits of the great Condé. His fine appearance, the nobleness of his manners, and his politeness aided the resemblance, which he completed in other respects."¹

Madame de Stael had made Bernadotte's acquaintance in 1797,² when she was the high priestess of a circle of

¹ Madame de Genlis (transl.), v. 122.

² Bernadotte, *The First Phase*, 249.

Constitutional Republicans. Their political opinions were in accord; but they had taken different sides at the time of the *coup d'état* of Brumaire. Upon that occasion Madame de Stael had accepted Bonaparte's professions of Republicanism at their face value, and had been conciliated by his appointment of her friend, Benjamin Constant, to the Tribune. The Tribune was the only grain of democracy in the Consular sandheap, and Benjamin Constant was the nearest approach to a turbulent tribune that it produced. When Bonaparte grew intolerant of the Tribune, and went so far as to procure Benjamin Constant's expulsion, Madame de Stael became angry and joined the opposition. She saw a great deal of Bernadotte, both in general society and in her own *salon*. Their moods harmonised. She encouraged his rising resentment at Bonaparte's usurpation of power, and he found in her witty conversation the expression of his own sentiments.

Madame de Stael's influence over her social circle is thus described by Lacratelle, who was one of them. "One lived in an atmosphere of enthusiasm near her, so thoroughly did her eloquence irradiate the dullest subject and animate the most frigid listener. It flashed forth in sallies. It was impossible successfully to resist her." The discontented Gascon was not a frigid listener, and he made no effort to resist her advocacy of views which were already his own. Their friendship was displeasing to Napoleon. When Madame de Stael was exiled from Paris by the First Consul's orders, she thus explained her exile: "Bonaparte said that people always left my house less attached to him than when they entered it. . . . Letters from Paris have informed me that after my departure the First Consul expressed himself very strongly about my association with General Bernadotte and my influence over him!"

Madame de Stael never wavered in her regard and

admiration for General Bernadotte. She described him as "the true hero of the age," and wrote to him, when she was in exile, "thy fiery glance is my fatherland." He was her beau-ideal of a soldier-statesman. Metternich observed that all her portraits of her contemporaries were true to the life except that of Bernadotte.¹ If Madame de Stael had a predilection for Bernadotte, Metternich was prejudiced against him. The Austrian aristocrat could never reconcile himself to the spectacle of a *parvenu* of the Revolution climbing to the topmost rung.

Madame Récamier was less brilliant but more womanly than Madame de Stael. She was the reigning beauty of Paris and the most graceful and charming woman of her time. Her friendship with Bernadotte had its origin in an incident which she has described in her *Souvenirs*.

One evening, in February 1801, Madame Récamier gave a party in honour of Madame Bacciochi, eldest sister of the First Consul. As her guests were rising from dinner, news reached Madame Récamier that her father, M. Bernard, had been arrested and lodged in the terrible Temple prison on a charge of distributing Royalist propaganda through the Post Office, of which department he was a high official.² Madame Récamier turned in her distress to Madame Bacciochi, who sent her to Fouché, the Minister of Police. Fouché said: "Your father's case is serious. See the First Consul this very night." Madame Bacciochi had gone, with her sister, Pauline, to the Théâtre Français, where Madame Récamier sought her out, and asked her help. She replied that after the play she would place herself at Madame Récamier's disposal. Madame Récamier, who was in a fever of anxiety and despair, retired into a dark corner of the box.

What ensued can be best told in her own words: "Then for the first time I remarked in the opposite corner of

¹ *Memoirs of Metternich*, iii. 476.

² *Journal des Débats*, 5 Ventôse, An. IX.



MADAME RÉCAMIER



MADAME DE GENLIS



MADAME DE STAËL

the box a man whose large dark eyes were fixed on me with an expression of such deep interest and compassion, that I felt touched. After having experienced so much coldness, it was a relief to meet with a little sympathy and kindness. At that moment Madame Pauline Leclerc turning to me asked if I had ever before seen the actor Lafon, in the role of Achilles, and without waiting for an answer she added: 'He is very handsome, but to-day he wears a most unbecoming tunic.' At this idle question, showing so much indifference to my state of feelings, . . . the unknown one made an involuntary movement of impatience, and, doubtless having made up his mind to shorten my punishment, he bent down to Madame Bacciochi, and said in a low voice: 'Madame Récamier seems to be in pain. If she will allow me, I shall take her home, and undertake to speak to the First Consul.' 'Certainly,' said Madame Bacciochi, delighted to escape the task. 'Nothing could be more fortunate for you, Madame. Put your trust in General Bernadotte. Nobody is in a better position to serve you.' I hastened to accept General Bernadotte's offer. I took his arm and left the theatre with him. He brought me to my carriage, and sat beside me, ordering his carriage to follow. During the journey he did his best to reassure me as to my father's fate, and so often repeated that he hoped to succeed in getting Bonaparte to stop the prosecution, that I arrived home somewhat consoled. He left for the Tuileries, promising to bring me word the same evening, whatever answer he might receive. . . . I counted the minutes until his return. He came at last happy and triumphant. By means of his pressure he had obtained from the First Consul the promise that my father would not be placed on trial, and he hoped, as he said, that he would soon be set at liberty. I wanted words sufficient to thank him. . . . Bernadotte did not abandon the task he had undertaken. One morning he came holding in his hand the Order

for my father's release, which he presented to me with that chivalrous grace which characterised him. He asked me, as his only recompense, the favour of accompanying me to the Temple to see the prisoner discharged."¹

At St. Helena, Napoleon stated that Madame Récamier went to him, and that he yielded to her cries and importunities so far as to release her father. Madame Récamier contradicted this statement; and it appears from the following letters that what happened was that Bernadotte forwarded a Memorial to the First Consul through Joseph Bonaparte :—

" BERNADOTTE TO MADAME RÉCAMIER.

" *March 4th, 1801.*

" I expected this morning to receive the Memorial which Madame Récamier was to forward through me. The Minister of Police insists that the Memorial is necessary for procuring the release of M. Bernard. The authorities seem well disposed. The moment is favourable, and it would be a misfortune not to seize it. Madame Récamier will realize that there is no time to be lost. . . . The desire with which Madame Récamier inspires everyone to be agreeable to her is a guarantee that she can rely upon me and that I am more entirely at her service than at that of BERNADOTTE."²

" BERNADOTTE TO JOSEPH BONAPARTE.

" *March 1801.*

" I yield with pleasure, my dear Joseph, to Madame Récamier's request, to forward the enclosed Memorial, which is addressed by her father to the First Consul. Madame Récamier, who resembles Venus in beauty and grace, seems to have come down from Olympus, in the guise of a suppliant. The motive of her petition

¹ *Souvenirs et Correspondance de Madame Récamier*, i. 68-78.

² *Souvenirs et Correspondance de Madame Récamier*, i. 77, 78.

enhances the interest which her fame excites. Surely it is an occasion when the stern magistrate may relax his frown and may yield to sentiments of mercy. . Filial affection inspires the prayer of this charming petitioner. She deserves all praise, since her object is the restoration to health and liberty of the author of her being. I congratulate myself upon being able to offer you such an opportunity. I embrace you. A thousand kind regards to Julie. Désirée desires me to remember her to you all.

J. B. BERNADOTTE." ¹

Madame Récamier's *salon* comprised some of the best of the men of mark of both the old and the new *régimes*. For example, when Lord and Lady Holland and Charles James Fox visited her at her country chateau, they met the Count de Narbonne, the brothers de Montmorency, Eugène Beauharnais, Generals Masséna, Moreau, Bernadotte, and Junot.² Among her circle of friends Madame Récamier reigned like a Queen, and lived in a little world of worship and adulation. Eugène Beauharnais always wore, until it was claimed back, a ring which he had begged from Madame Récamier as a charm. General Masséna carried everywhere a ribbon of which he wrote: "The charming ribbon given by Madame Récamier was worn by General Masséna in all the battles which preceded and followed the siege of Genoa. The General has never been without it, and it has constantly brought about the victory."³

That Bernadotte was not to be outdone by Masséna as a gallant letter-writer is proved by the following story. Before the end of March 1801, the Peace of Amiens enabled Madame Récamier to visit London, where her reputation had preceded her. The Paris newspapers announced her success, and gave currency to rumours that she had sustained some injury, through

¹ Catalogue of Morrison Autograph Letters, ii. 172; Herriot's, *Madame Récamier*, i. 87. ² *Id.*, i. 95. ³ *Id.*, i. 55, 56.

being mobbed in the streets by crowds of admirers. These rumours are referred to in the following letter :—

"GENERAL BERNADOTTE TO MADAME RECAMIER.

"MADAME,—I did not reply immediately to your letter, because I was waiting in the hope of being able to inform you of the appointment of the new Ambassador at the Court of St. James. It was generally reported that General Berthier would be selected; but this report was without foundation, and public opinion tends in a direction which is more essential to the public weal. While the English newspapers have calmed my anxiety about your health, they have made me aware of the danger to which you have been exposed. I blamed the people of London for their excess of zeal, but I must confess that I quickly found excuses for them, for I am interested in defending those who are driven to indiscretion by admiration of the charms of your celestial beauty. In the midst of the *éclat* that surrounds you, please deign to remember sometimes that the being who is most devoted to you in the world is
BERNADOTTE." ¹

¹ *Souvenirs, etc., de Madame Récamier*, i. 102.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CONSPIRACY OF PARIS JANUARY-APRIL 1802

"After the purging of the Tribune there formed round him (Bernadotte) a party of generals and Senators who encouraged him to form resolutions against the usurpation which was advancing at rapid strides."—MADAME DE STAEL.

"Their leader was General Bernadotte."—SAVARY.

"Moreau, Bernadotte, Masséna, did not forgive my success."—BONAPARTE.

IN the early months of 1802 Bernadotte's career reached a point where its direction and purpose came into conflict with the aims of the most ambitious and forceful man of his times. Hitherto his grounds of complaint against the First Consul had been of a personal and of a comparatively trivial character. A more serious cause of quarrel now began to show itself. It was at this period that Napoleon began to take down the republican scaffolding which concealed his processes of empire-building. One of these processes was the issue of edicts which bore the imposing title of *Senatus consulta*. The Senators were his nominees, and the majority of them were his obedient servants. In reality these high-sounding decrees resembled, from a constitutional standpoint, the *lettres de cachet* of the Bourbon Kings.¹

One of his first blows was aimed at a small but vigorous minority forming the parliamentary opposition in the Tribune. On 21st January, the First Consul wrote to his obsequious colleagues, the Second Consul and the Third Consul: "Take special care that the twenty bad members (*mauvais Membres*) of the Tribune be

¹ Sorel, vi. 225.

removed." On the 24th he wrote that "the least thing the Senate can do is to remove the twenty dissident members (*membres dissidents*), and to put in their place twenty well-disposed men (*hommes bien pensants*)."¹ A few days afterwards a *Senatus consultum* was promulgated excluding the twenty recalcitrant Tribunes, one whom was Benjamin Constant.

It was this assault upon the independence of the Tribune that caused a minority of the Senate and a number of prominent generals to form a combination which, according to the jargon of that day, became known as "the Conspiracy of Paris." It was not so much an organised league as a social clique which used *salons* and *boudoirs* for meeting-places. The whole movement seems to have evaporated in frothy talk, and to have brought forth no offspring save a few wild and still-born schemes. It never amounted to more than a *coterie*, or, as its enemies would say, a *camarilla*. Perhaps a sound judgment may be formed as to the extent and significance of "the Conspiracy of Paris" by comparing the evidence of two writers who, from opposite points of view, were interested and well-informed witnesses. These were Madame de Stael, herself a votaress of the "conspiracy," and Savary, who, as Chief of the Gendarmerie, was bound to know the worst that could be said of it.

Madame de Stael tells us that "after the purging of the Tribune there formed round General Bernadotte a party of generals and senators, who encouraged him to form resolutions against the usurpation which was advancing at rapid strides." He proposed "a variety of plans all founded on some legislative measure, considering all other means as contrary to his principles." But not a single member of the Senate dared to identify himself with such a proposal. "While this most perilous negotiation continued," writes Madame de Stael,

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, vii. 5927, 5931.

"I was in the habit of seeing General Bernadotte and his friends very frequently. This was more than enough to ruin me, if their designs were discovered. Bonaparte . . . paused at the idea of sacrificing General Bernadotte either because his military talents were necessary to him; or because he was restrained by the family ties which connected them; or because he was afraid of the greater popularity of Bernadotte with the French army; or finally because there is a certain charm in his (Bernadotte's) manners which renders it difficult even to Bonaparte to become entirely his enemy."¹

There is a touch of incongruity about the idea that Bonaparte was restrained from acting against Bernadotte by the latter's charm of manner. As well might a hungry lion be restrained from his predacious proclivities by the pleasing effect produced upon his senses by the gaudy stripes of a passing tiger. Save for this characteristic flash from her feminine imagination, Madame de Stael's testimony probably represents correctly the social fringe of the movement which came under her notice.

Savary tells a different tale. Speaking from the point of view of a military policeman, he declares that the malcontent generals and senators of 1802 did not confine themselves to mere words, but went to treasonable lengths, and were guilty of overt acts of conspiracy. "Their senseless meetings," he writes, "which became alarming from the very madness of those who composed them, were headed by General Bernadotte, who at this period held the command of the western army. Although nearly allied to the Bonaparte family, he had often attended the meetings at which the mode of getting rid of the First Consul had come under discussion. It is fair to acknowledge that he always opposed any attempt being made on his life; but he advised his being forcibly carried off; a course which must necessarily have been

¹ *Ten Years Exile*, 68.

attended with such a result. Every other member was for putting him to death."¹ "Upon principle," writes a modern historian, "and also no doubt to protect himself in case of failure, Bernadotte was disposed to act by legal means only, after obtaining a vote of the Senate."²

Madame Récamier and Madame de Stael, who were Bernadotte's confidantes, tell the same story. They say that his plan was to organise a deputation strong in numbers and in personnel, to remonstrate with the First Consul and to propose a retrenchment of his power. It was easy to find senators and generals to approve of this proposal, but the difficulty was to find anyone willing to join such a deputation. The senators, one and all, shrank from facing the redoubtable Little Corporal; and even the generals showed a disposition to hold back. Masséna is said by Napoleon to have been deputed by his comrades to propose to him the division of France among the leading generals, leaving Paris and its neighbourhood to the First Consul, and to have refused the mission on the ground that Bonaparte would have had him shot by the Consular Guard. The story is a fanciful one, and was perhaps invented in order to discredit the generals with the nation. There is no reliable evidence that they ever entertained such a design. More credible is the story that Augereau went to Bonaparte and protested on behalf of himself and his colleagues against having to take part in proceedings of which they disapproved, and was dismissed with a recommendation to mind his own business and to obey whatever orders might be conveyed to him.

Bonaparte had no illusions about the attitude of the generals towards his quick climb to absolute power. To Chaptal he summarised his ascent in an oft-quoted passage "I had gained the command of armies

¹ *Memoirs by Savary, Duke of Rovigo* (transl.), Vol. I, Part I, 287.

² M. Pariset in *Cambridge Modern History*, ix. 21.

young" (in 1796, at the age of 26 or 27). "My first campaigns astounded Europe" (the Italian Campaigns of 1796 and 1797). "The Directory, always foolish and inept, could not tolerate me in the position which I had reached. I undertook a gigantic expedition in order to occupy attention and to increase my glory"¹ (the expedition to Egypt, May 1798). . . . "When I saw France in the lowest depths I returned" (October 1799). "I found the path to the throne open. I ascended it as the last hope of the nation. Scarcely seated I saw the pretensions of others revive. Moreau, Bernadotte, Masséna, did not forgive me my success. . . . They tried several times to overthrow me or to share power with me."

In the passage which has just been quoted Napoleon treats himself as on the throne when he was First Consul. But "the conspirators of Paris" would doubtless have pointed out, if they had dared, that he was the head of a republic, and that they apprehended a usurpation, and were justified in resisting it. They were not alone in their apprehensions. There were observant foreigners in Paris who were beginning to see very clearly what was coming. The Russian envoy wrote to his Government (5th June 1802): "Many people are convinced that Bonaparte will take another title and call himself Emperor of the Gauls. It would not be an idle title, because he has in fact united all the Gauls under French domination."² The Prussian Envoy wrote to the same effect (20th July 1802): "He (Bonaparte) wishes to reproduce Charlemagne up-to-date. There is no doubt that he has formed the project; without fixing the hour of carrying it out."³ Mr. Merry, the English Diplomat, had already in a cypher despatch informed our Foreign Office that Bonaparte intended to take the title of Emperor. He also reported that a conspiracy of generals had come into existence for the

¹ Cf. *Bernadotte, The First Phase*, 325.

² Chaptal's *Souvenirs*, 249-251.

³ Sorel, vi. 227

purpose of counteracting these ambitious projects.¹ It is interesting to find Russian, Prussian, and English diplomats anticipating the Empire, two years before it came into existence. Who can be surprised that a declared Republican, such as Bernadotte was, should have entertained suspicions which were shared by so many detached observers? Was he blamable for taking counsel as to how best to stem the current? Doubtless he would have acted more prudently if he had availed himself of his close alliance with the ruling family, and if he had thrown himself in with the development of Bonaparte's policy. But, from the point of view of political consistency, he would surely not have played an independent or an honourable part, if he had identified himself, as he ultimately did, with Bonaparte's ambitious designs, without having first offered to them all the resistance that was reasonably possible.

Bernadotte's opposition to Napoleon, and the personal antipathy which it sometimes engendered, never blinded him to the transcendent abilities of that remarkable man. He frequently acknowledged them. For example, in March 1802 Ménéval was considering an offer of a secretarial position under Bonaparte. He tells us that Bernadotte spoke with admiration of the First Consul's talents, and advised him to accept the offer, pointing out to Ménéval the happiness of a life with so great a man, and of being the constant witness of the inspirations of his genius.²

Bernadotte's name was connected by gossip or by rumour with almost every Republican plot that was hatched during the Consulate; but the so-called "Conspiracy of Paris" was the only one of them as regards which his complicity is established by unquestionable evidence. It hardly deserved the name of a conspiracy; but, whatever may have been its real character, there can be no doubt that Bernadotte has been correctly described as its "pivot."³

¹ F.O. 27/62 (Merry's letters of 7th May and 12th May 1802).

² Ménéval, i. 97

³ *Cambridge Modern History*, ix, 2.

CHAPTER IX

BERNADOTTE AND MOREAU—THE CONSPIRACY OF DONNADIEU MAY 1802

"It is all over with the French Army. The Consulate for life is as bad as the Monarchy."—*Words spoken by General Moreau in 1802.*

"Davout and his police had invented a piece of fiction; in their exasperation against Bernadotte they sought to implicate him in the Donnadiou affair."—AUGUSTIN THIÉRY, *The Plot of the Placards*, page 222.

THE *chef d'œuvre* of Napoleon Bonaparte's whole career was the policy of reconstruction and of appeasement, which reached its culminating point in the spring of 1802, when, having procured the passing of a religious Concordat by the Legislature, he marked that event by an official ceremony at the Cathedral of Notre Dame, and proceeded to reconcile the new with the old France by proclaiming an amnesty of the émigrés. When we find Generals Moreau, Bernadotte, and Masséna leading a strenuous opposition to these measures, our sympathies are naturally drawn to the side of Bonaparte. Nevertheless, the brilliancy of his Consular statesmanship need not blind us to the ambitious designs which were its aim and inspiration. It was not from a religious standpoint that the Concordat was either carried or resisted. It was resisted because the Opposition regarded Church establishment as a forerunner of some kind of monarchist restoration. It was carried, because the chief of the State, who was working for an imperial diadem, wished to chain theology to the car of the civil government; to make the clergy his "sacred police;" to

have the children taught to obey him in the catechism; to be prayed for in every parish in France; and to enlist on his side all the magical influence which is symbolised in the "music of church bells."¹

While Bonaparte pushed forward ameliorative measures with one hand, he was grasping at power with the other. In January, he had expelled the opposition from the popular House. In May, he received a prolongation of the Consulate for an additional term of ten years. This did not satisfy his ambition, although it would have kept him at the head of affairs until after the battle of Waterloo. His next step was to get himself proclaimed First Consul for life, with a civil list of £250,000 and with a right of nominating a successor.

Among the politicians and in the civil population there was hardly any resistance to Bonaparte's advance towards autocracy. The majority of the politicians were provided with offices or with well-paid seats in one or other of the so-called legislative bodies. The general public were so sick of revolution and of disorder that they preferred the yoke of a strong ruler to the greater evil of popular tyranny. Bonaparte availed himself of other machinery besides the support of the people and the acquiescence of the politicians. He was careful to fence his path to power with an extraordinarily vigilant and comprehensive police system. His police were organised in a quadrilateral formation. There was a Minister of Police, Fouché; the Prefect of the Metropolitan Police, Dubois; the head of the Military Police, General Davout; and the Chief of the Gendarmerie, General Savary. It suited Bonaparte to stimulate rivalry between these four separate departments, and to encourage them to keep watch and to act as checks upon each other. In this way all the civil elements of discontent were kept well in hand; and the only

¹ *L'Opposition religieuse au Concordat*, xvi., Bignon, *Histoire de France* cited in the *Historians' History of the World*, xii. 520; *Bonaparte et Moreau*, 371 n.

place in which political independence found expression was in the higher ranks of the Army.

The Peace of Amiens (March 1802) had brought to Paris an ever increasing number of unemployed generals with their staff officers, as well as a host of officers of lower rank. It is said that there were as many as six thousand or seven thousand officers in Paris in the spring of 1802 trailing their swords along the boulevards. The majority of them regarded with hatred and envy the "Little Corporal" who, having seized upon all the power of the State, had planted himself in the palaces of the Bourbons and was openly advancing by rapid strides towards the re-establishment of a throne. Count Philip de Ségur¹ has recorded that the generals were indignant at being condemned to become the subjects and footstools of Bonaparte. They had marched to republican music; they had proclaimed republican sentiments; and they had fought for ten years in defence of republican institutions. None of them had done these things with more force and zeal than Bonaparte himself, who had encouraged their republican spirit so long as it suited his ambition. Now they were forced to be the witnesses of the gradual extinction of the republic, and of Bonaparte's open and rapid climb to the position of the only man in the State. Their opinions were expressed in General Delmas' well-known taunt addressed to Bonaparte in reference to the celebration of the Concordat. "The only thing missing was the million of men who have died in order to destroy what you are re-establishing."

In 1802, the generals had no notion that Bonaparte could ever found an empire, or create the atmosphere of power of glory and of conquest, which they were destined soon to breathe and to live in. But he had laid his plans, which included a way of making them all his instruments. It was of them he said: "Fear, and the hope of fortune and fame, were the only ties to

¹ De Ségur, ii. 120.

bind them to me. I showered both fortune and fame upon them. I made them my courtiers, but I never pretended that I made them my friends."

This crowd of military malcontents looked for leadership to the generals who enjoyed the highest prestige and distinction, and especially to Moreau and to Bernadotte, who became known in the Army by the popular title of "The Last of the Romans."¹

In 1802 Moreau stood first among the generals of the Republic after Bonaparte himself. Like Bernadotte, he had been on good terms with the First Consul during the first year of the Consulate, but he had gradually drifted away, and now had definitely associated himself with the opposition. After his glorious campaign of Hohenlinden, he had settled down at Grosbois, his country seat near Versailles—once the residence of the ex-Director Barras—where he hunted and shot, and lived a retired life. He had married a daughter of Madame Hulot, a fashionable Creole, who was devoured by jealousy of her compatriot, Josephine Bonaparte. Moreau was not a strong personality. His wife and mother-in-law governed him, and ruined his career, which became, in the words of a writer of that day, "the plaything of two women" (*le jouet de deux femmes*).² In this respect his experience offers a contrast to that of Bernadotte, whose wife and sister-in-law gained for him, on more than one occasion, protection and advancement.

Moreau asserted everywhere that he had been cajoled by Bonaparte, who had induced him to support the *coup d'état* of Brumaire by declaring that his only aim was to consolidate the Republic. He complained that he had been led to expect that Bonaparte would play the part of Washington, not of Cromwell. Every step which Bonaparte took towards absolute power was resented and criticised by Moreau and by his family

¹ Guillon (citing Thibaudeau), 25; Bonaparte et Moreau, 352.

² Sir R. Wilson's *Diary*, 403.

circle. He pointedly absented himself from the celebration of the Concordat of Notre Dame, and made fun of Napoleon's Legion of Honour, by investing his dog with a collar, and by calling his chef the "Chevalier de la casserole."

While Moreau and Bernadotte were prudent enough to confine their plans within constitutional limits, there were plenty of officers who were not so moderate or so restrained. The summer of 1802 was fruitful in conspiracies, one of which deserves a passing mention, namely, the conspiracy of Donnadiou.

On 7th May 1802 two cavalry colonels, Donnadiou and Fournier, were arrested on a charge of conspiracy to assassinate the First Consul. Donnadiou was a political soldier of less distinction than Fournier, who was a *beau sabreur* with a personal grievance. His complaint was that in the Marengo campaign Bonaparte had robbed him of the credit of a successful cavalry charge, and had given the glory of it to a favourite of his own, General Bessières.¹ This conspiracy, which was dealt with by General Davout, the head of the Military Police, was never brought to trial. The conspirators, after a disagreeable experience of dungeon life, were released, and both officers were ultimately restored to their rank.

Donnadiou and Fournier were friends of General Moreau; but there was no evidence to implicate either him or Bernadotte in their proceedings. It appears, however, that Davout suspected Bernadotte and placed his house under *surveillance*. Augustin Thierry, a writer by no means friendly to Bernadotte, gives the following account of this incident: "Davout and his police had invented a piece of fiction; in their exasperation against Bernadotte, they sought to implicate him in the Donnadiou affair. 'High Treason,' they said. It appears that one of Davout's spies hired a room which overlooked

¹ Guillon, 19.

Bernadotte's house and garden. Bernadotte was indignant, and complained to Joseph." There followed a scene between Joseph and the First Consul, and a life-long estrangement between Bernadotte and Davout, which had its origin in this incident.¹

Although Bernadotte was free from complicity in the Donnadiou affair, it is abundantly clear that, if successful, it would have been for his benefit. His name was mentioned in this sense on several occasions, one of which may serve as an example. Two police spies, having been thrown together unwittingly, tried to draw each other. One of them opened the conversation by referring to General Bernadotte as the chief hope of Republican France. "But, alas, too honest!" said the other. "Why after commanding in Brittany had Bernadotte not marched on Paris with his forty thousand men? He would have been acclaimed, and would have overthrown Bonaparte's despotism." The other *mouchard* agreed in deprecating the scruples of the Republican General. In this way the two spies, unaware that they were *confrères* in business, were trying to entrap each other by praising the man who was looked upon as chief of the Republican opposition.²

Enough has been said to show in what a dangerous position Bernadotte stood in the summer of 1802. In the same month in which the Donnadiou Conspiracy was unearthed, another plot was discovered which exposed him to still greater suspicion and nearly caused his complete ruin. This was the Conspiracy of Rennes, otherwise known as "The Plot of the Placards."

¹ *The Plot of the Placards*, 222.

² *Revue des deux mondes*, li. 783.

CHAPTER X

THE PLOT OF THE PLACARDS

MAY-SEPTEMBER 1802

"The Conspiracy of the Butter Cocks."—General Moreau's nickname for the Plot of the Placards.

THE conspiracy of Rennes, otherwise called the "Plot of the Placards," is best known through the entertaining account of it which is contained in the memoirs of Baron Marcellin de Marbot.¹ Like the rest of his recollections, Marbot's account of the Plot of the Placards will always remain delightful reading. It has, however, been condemned by every writer who has examined the documents as being utterly untrustworthy. One of them says of it that "it is nothing but an amusing and audacious piece of imagination. Errors of fact as well as improbability of detail swarm in this romantic fiction."²

The *mise en scène* which Marbot presents to his readers will serve as an example of its unreliability. He says that at the date of this affair (May and June 1802), Bernadotte found himself at Rennes with an army of 80,000 men under him, composed of his own corps and of General Leclerc's corps, which was awaiting embarkation for San Domingo, and that he went to Paris, telling his fellow-conspirators that he was going to the Capital, so as to be in a position to seize the reins of government on the outbreak of the plot. This is a very circumstantial and a very incriminating statement. As a matter of fact General Leclerc's corps had embarked

¹ *Mémoires de Marbot*, i. 153; Butler's translation. i. 113.

² Augustin Thierry, *The Plot of the Placards* (Eng. tr.), 305.

for San Domingo in the previous November and December. Bernadotte's army had been suppressed in the previous April and had been reduced to the size of a division of 16,000 men. Bernadotte, in consequence of the dissolution of his army, had relinquished the command, and had been recalled to Paris, and General Delaborde had succeeded to the command of the troops at Rennes. The errors in Marbot's story afford an illustration of the worthlessness of mere hearsay evidence. While the events in question were occurring, Marbot was in Spain, whither he had gone carrying with him a grievance against Bernadotte. His brother, Adolphe, continued to be one of Bernadotte's aides-de-camp, and suffered in the affair. Marcellin, long after the event, gathered together all the rumours and gossip that he could pick up, and turned them into an agreeable but misleading narrative.

Several accounts of the Plot of the Placards have been given by writers who have examined the documents.¹ The true story of the affair is not so sensational or entertaining as Marbot's tale; but it makes an interesting detective story, and one that is thoroughly illustrative of police methods in the days of the Consulate.

The Plot came to light in the following way. Captain Auguste Rapatel, whose brother was aide-de-camp to General Moreau, had served in Bernadotte's army of the West, and, since the dissolution of that army, had returned to Paris, where he was carrying on a love affair with a young lady who rejoiced in the name of Felicia. On the morning of 28th May 1802 the captain received a hamper from Rennes marked "Clothes and Liveries sent by Citizen Jourdeuil." The basket was two-thirds full of hay, but beneath the hay were nine

¹ Guillon, *Les Complots Militaires*, Chap. II, 26-47; Augustin Thierry, *The Plot of the Placards*, (Eng. tr.); Henri Welshinger, *Revue de Famille*, 1891

bulky packets of papers addressed to officers in Brittany, with a card on which was written "To be posted without delay and in different places," "Caution—Haste—Communication." The packets each contained three documents. The first was an "Appeal to the armies of France by their Comrades," denouncing Bonaparte as a tyrant and usurper, the second was "An Address to the armies of the various corps and to all Officers on half-pay scattered far and wide over the Republic," advocating a military federation for the preservation of the Republic; and the third was a racy pamphlet entitled "From the Monks of the Order of St. Francis to First Consul Bonaparte."

These were the documents which gave to the conspiracy the name of the Plot of the Placards. Marbot's statement that the placards or any of them were signed by Bernadotte is quite unfounded. The only mention of his name in the placards occurs in the following passage: "A petty tyrant dictates laws to us; his family alone is powerful, his brothers-in-law are generals, the juniors by a long way of Moreau, Bernadotte, Jourdan, Masséna, Macdonald, Richepanse, Brune, and Lecourbe."

Captain Rapatel in a weak moment showed some of of these documents to his sweetheart, who, becoming alarmed at their contents, carried them to the office of Dubois, who was the Prefect of Metropolitan Police, and, as such, the jealous rival of the Minister of Police, Fouché. Miss Felicia under cross-examination invented a story that the placards came in "Butter Cocks," and, in order to screen her lover, she stated that they were intended, not for him, but for his brother who was the aide-de-camp of General Moreau.

Dubois eagerly conveyed the news to Bonaparte, who had every reason, at this time, for feeling resentment against Moreau. The First Consul instructed Dubois, and Lavalette, the Postmaster General, to investigate

the matter, and to censor all letters and parcels addressed to Brittany, but not to tell Fouché. Fouché, however, had his own agents in the Post Office, through whom he quickly got wind of the affair. Believing it to be the outcome of a Royalist plot, and thus getting on a wrong scent, he communicated his belief to the Prefect at Rennes, and set him on the track of the authors of the placards.

The Prefect at Rennes happened to be an honest and competent official named Mounier, a returned *émigré* of a moderate and constitutional type, who was grateful to the Consular Government for having recalled him to France and for having given him an important post. Acting on Fouché's idea, Mounier proceeded to search the premises of the only Royalist printer in Rennes. His innocence was quickly established; and his co-operation was obtained. Upon being shown the placards, he pointed out that the letter "R" in the word "ARMÉES" had a notch in it. Mounier gave prompt instructions to his subordinates to follow up this clue. A policeman's eye was caught by a local theatre bill, on which Mehul's Opera, "L'Irrato," was starred. He perceived that one of the letters "R" in "Irrato" had the same notch, and that at the foot of the playbill was the name of a Jacobin printer named Chausseblanche, who was immediately placed under arrest. By dint of cross-examination and cajolery he was induced to reveal the names of his employers. These were General Simon, ex-Chief of the Staff in the army of the West, and a quartermaster with the rank of sub-lieutenant, named Bertrand. Simon and Bertrand were forthwith placed under arrest.

General Simon was a soldier who dabbled in literature, and an enthusiastic Republican of the Roundhead type. He made a frank confession, and admitted the authorship of two of the placards, while Bertrand, who was a rhymester and pamphleteer, acknowledged himself the

author of the third. They had both lost their appointments in consequence of the suppression of the Army of the West. Simon had gone into retirement and was living in a cottage near Rennes. He stated that he had been moved to take part in the affair by his indignation at Bonaparte's reactionary policy, and especially by his acceptance of the Consulate for life.

The police trapped the carrier of the placards, an officer's servant named Jourdeuil, who had come to Paris in charge of some horses belonging to three ex-members of Bernadotte's staff, one of whom was Lieutenant Adolphe Marbot, the brother of the Memoir writer. Marbot appears to have been as ignorant of the contents of his servant's box, as was Benjamin of the silver cup that was placed in his sack. He was imprisoned, but was soon released without being brought to trial. Indeed, nobody was brought to trial. Bonaparte had no wish to advertise the existence of conspiracies against himself. He wished to be thought all-powerful in France. General Simon was kept in close confinement for fifteen months. Bertrand disappeared, probably to the police service.

General Simon and the other accused officers entirely absolved Moreau and Bernadotte from any knowledge of or complicity in the plot, and it appears to be admitted that Bernadotte was not implicated either by the witnesses or by the correspondence. It has been suggested that Fouché may have destroyed the documents. But the witnesses were all examined by Mounier at Rennes, and their depositions have been preserved. Besides, Fouché is not likely to have taken such a risk with Dubois on the watch to catch him tripping.

It is difficult to believe that any clever, cautious man, such as Bernadotte was, however ill-disposed he may have been to the Government, could have made himself a party to a proceeding so clumsy, and so certain of speedy detection. The "Plot" did not contemplate

anything more than the distribution of propaganda, by means of "placards," which were sent indiscriminately to all officers of high rank whether they were Republicans or Bonapartists.¹ One was addressed to, and was received by, General Berthier, Minister of War. The Headquarters of the Police was blocked with parcels of placards forwarded by recipients who were supporters of the First Consul. General Moreau, upon whom suspicion naturally fell, poured ridicule upon the whole affair, nicknamed it the "Conspiracy of the Butter Cocks," and made such fun of it, that Bonaparte challenged him to a duel, which was averted by the astute and tactful Fouché.

Marbot suggests that Bernadotte, having escaped prosecution for want of any definite proof of his complicity, left his unfortunate confederates to their fate. But, the truth appears to be that he solicited, through his brother-in-law Joseph, the pardon of General Simon and his companions, and that the First Consul gave the chilling reply: "Tell General Bernadotte that it would be well for him to begin at home. Before asking the pardon of others, he should have obtained his own."²

Of Bernadotte's complicity in the Plot of the Placards no evidence has ever been forthcoming. Nevertheless, whether he was cognisant of the Plot or not, two things at all events are clear. There was enough suspicion to convict him ten times over in those days, if Bonaparte had chosen to put him on trial; and he could hardly have denied that his gasconading conversations, his republican orders of the day, and his public attitude as a *frondeur* towards a Bonapartist usurpation, had stimulated the spirit which inspired the proceedings of men who had recently been serving under him.

Bonaparte's anger knew no bounds. He spoke to those about him³ of having Bernadotte shot. Bourrienne tells us that on the morning of a *levée*, the First Consul

¹ Desmarest, 79, 80

² Sarrazin, *Phil*, ii, 205 *et seq.*

³ Ménéval, Rapp, and Lucien Bonaparte.

declared his intention of having a scene with Bernadotte on that day. Bourrienne, who had never seen his chief in such a passion, slipped away to the *salon* where he saw Bernadotte standing in the recess of a window. "General," he said, "trust me and retire. I have good reason for advising it." The general acted on his friend's advice, and took an early opportunity of retiring to Plombières,¹ the well-known watering-place, on a pretext of health.

Among the visitors at Plombières was General Rapp, who liked Bernadotte, and saw a great deal of him. Bernadotte complained that he had been calumniated, and asked Rapp upon his return to Paris to make his peace with the First Consul. Rapp, having promised to do so, was discouraged, but was not diverted from his purpose, when he was informed that Madame Joseph Bonaparte had already made the attempt, with the result that she was seen leaving the First Consul's presence in a flood of tears. Finding what he thought was a favourable opportunity, just as Bonaparte was mounting his horse to attend a *fête* which Murat was giving in his honour, Rapp launched into an eloquent defence of his absent friend. Bonaparte angrily told Rapp not to mention the name of Bernadotte, who, he said, "deserved to be shot," and galloped away leaving Rapp discomfited.²

In September of 1802 Bernadotte was still at Plombières waiting for the clouds to roll by, and Bonaparte was looking out for some suitable opportunity of sending him to the uttermost parts of the earth.

¹ Bourrienne, v. 8, 9.

² *Mémoires du Général Rapp*, 16.

CHAPTER XI

LOUISIANA AND WASHINGTON

SEPTEMBER 1802—JUNE 1803

"Fate seems to have pursued me for a long time and to be always placing me without any fault of my own in opposition to the intentions of the First Consul."—*Bernadotte to Joseph Bonaparte, May 1803.*

BERNADOTTE remained at the waters during the autumn of 1802. We find a Paris newspaper in September mentioning his presence at Plombières, and announcing an improvement in his health.¹ He was beginning to despair of any honourable career in France, and to turn his thoughts again to plans of emigration. He was not alone in taking up this desponding attitude. We know that at this period Joseph, Lucien, and Eliza Bonaparte (Madame Bacciochi), and their mother, known to history as Madame Mère, became so alarmed at the First Consul's ambitious proceedings, and so little confident in their prosperous issue, that, like Bernadotte, they were seriously proposing to settle in the United States.²

The First Consul, who desired nothing better than to place the Atlantic between himself and Bernadotte, proposed to take the would-be emigrant at his word by offering him the Governorship of Louisiana.

The name of Louisiana had a fascination for Frenchmen, for whom its history was a romance of colonisation. Its first settlers had been men of French blood who had found their way from the great lakes along the waters of the mighty Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico, and the territory, of which they took or claimed possession, was called Louisiana in honour of the *Roi soleil*. In the reign of Louis XV it had been bartered to Spain, but had recently been ceded back by Spain to France.

¹ *Journal des Débats*, 11th Sept. 1802; *Journal de Paris*, 15th Sept. 1802.

² *Lucien Bonaparte et ses Mémoires*, ii. 252.



PAULINE BONAPARTE
(Madame Lederer ; Princess Borghese)
Duchess of Guastalla 1806



ELIZA BONAPARTE
(Madame Bacchiochi)
Grand Duchess of Lucca and
Piombino 1806



LUCIEN BONAPARTE
Prince of Canino



CAROLINE BONAPARTE
(Madame Murat)
Grand Duchess of Berg and Cleves 1806
Queen of Naples 1808

Four intimate friends of Bernadotte

Napoleon was maturing a scheme for re-establishing French authority upon the banks of the Mississippi, as part of a large plan of Empire in the Western Hemisphere. The Louisiana of 1802 was in size and productiveness an empire in itself; but it was sparsely populated. It covered a far wider area than the modern State of that name, containing approximately 1,000,000 square miles, with a population of some 80,000, which has now grown to more than 15,000,000.

It was probably intended that Bernadotte's mission should be one of conquest. The British Foreign Office was informed in a despatch from Paris that "When General Bernadotte proceeds to Louisiana (which will be as soon as the armaments can be prepared) he is to take possession at the same time of the Floridas."¹ We know from the same source that the American Minister, Mr. Livingston, exerted all his influence to oppose the sending of the expedition.²

The Governorship of Louisiana appears to have had great attractions for Bernadotte. He saw in it a career of independence and of glory, far away from Bonaparte. He made himself familiar with the history and with the material conditions of the colony, and cherished the dream of making it a flourishing centre of commerce and of civilisation. Realising the impossibility of defending or developing so large an area without the introduction of fresh blood, he laid it down, as a condition of his acceptance of the post, that 3,000 soldiers and an equal number of cultivators should be placed at his disposal and should be maintained by France for two years. He undertook to maintain them himself after that period. The First Consul would not listen to any such conditions: "I would not do so much," he said, "even for one of my own brothers."³ Bernadotte,

¹ F. O. State Paper 27/62. (despatch from M. Merry). ² *Ib.*, 27/63.

³ Barbé Marbois, 223, *Histoire de la Louisiane*; Masson, *Nap. et sa famille*, ii. 93.

when his conditions were refused, regretfully declined the appointment.

We are tempted to speculate what might have happened if Louisiana had remained French with Bernadotte as its Governor. His administrative capacity, adaptability, and power of winning popular attachment might have enabled him to render great services. Perhaps he might have been handed down with Madison and Monroe among the founders of American greatness.

The proposed establishment of French authority in Louisiana soon became the subject of acute political agitation and controversy in the United States, where a powerful section of public opinion advocated the invasion and conquest of the Colony. The First Consul now offered to Bernadotte the post of Ambassador plenipotentiary to the United States, which appeared to be one of special importance in view of the pending differences between the two countries. Bernadotte agreed to accept the appointment in January 1803, but delayed his departure until the First Consul sent him peremptory orders to repair at once to Washington.

When the Ambassador started on his mission he was unaware that secret negotiations were proceeding which were to deprive it of all its significance. On 10th April the First Consul had suddenly made up his mind to sell Louisiana to the United States for eighty millions of francs (£3,200,000), a useful contribution to the expenses of the impending war. On 12th April, the very day of Bernadotte's departure, the celebrated Monroe arrived in Paris as Minister Plenipotentiary to France; and Bonaparte appointed Barbé Marbois to negotiate with him. These diplomatic arrangements, of which Bernadotte was kept in entire ignorance, converted his diplomatic mission into a mere fool's errand, without any serious object or purpose.¹

¹ *Journal des Débats*, 13th April 1803; Barbé Marbois, 285, 302; *Whitworth Despatches*, 41, 174; F. O. 27/67, 27/68.

When Bernadotte, accompanied by his wife, his son, and his aide-de-camp, Colonel Gerard, was leaving La Grange he remarked that he was perhaps looking at his country home for the last time. "I don't believe a word of it," said Gerard, who, when pressed for an explanation, replied that he had been taken by a relative to visit a fortune-teller, who had foretold that he and his General would be prevented leaving France by unforeseen circumstances. The fortune-teller's prophecy was strangely fulfilled. On arrival at La Rochelle, the vessel which was to have taken them to America was counter-ordered to carry General Ernouf to Guadeloupe, of which Island he had just been appointed Captain-General. A second vessel, which was to carry the Bernadottes, was recalled in order to convey supplies to the army in St. Domingo. A third vessel was being got ready, when the Paris newspapers reached La Rochelle, announcing that the negotiations with the United States had been brought to a conclusion, that Lord Whitworth, the English Ambassador, had left Paris on 12th May, and that on 16th May war had been declared between France and England.

When Bernadotte became aware that Louisiana had been sold to the United States, and that war was imminent between France and England, he at once resolved to throw up his diplomatic appointment, and wrote the following letter dated 27th May, to his brother-in-law:—

BERNADOTTE TO JOSEPH BONAPARTE.

"On my return to La Rochelle I read in the *Moniteur* the declaration of War by England. Fate seems to have pursued me for a long time, and to be always placing me, without any fault of my own, in opposition of the intentions of the First Consul. The course of events compels me to ask him to allow me to return to my military duties. Before he became a civil magistrate he was a general, and no one will be better able than him to judge that duty, honour, and delicacy of feeling (*delicatesse*) have prompted me to make this request of

him. If, in spite of my efforts, my enemies endeavour to set him against me, I appeal to you, my dear Joseph, to point out to him that no blame can justly attach to me, since two frigates, which were successively allotted to my mission, have been employed for other purposes, and the third frigate cannot set sail for a fortnight. . . .

"I hope to be restored to the position of which I have been deprived by the influence of those who are the jealous enemies of your fortunes and of mine. You will be able to bring all my claims before the General, and to ask him to give me a command. You know that which I wish for most of all. If your application proves unsuccessful, I shall retire to the country and live as a peaceful citizen. I embrace you, and I beg of you to forward to the Consul the enclosed letter.

"J. B. BERNADOTTE."¹

Enclosed was the following letter to the First Consul :—

"GENERAL,—On my return to La Rochelle I have been informed of public events which lead me to regard my mission as at an end; and I see in the *Moniteur* that England has declared war against France. I offer to the Government my services and my sword. I start for Paris to-morrow.

J. B. BERNADOTTE."²

Bonaparte, who had hoped to rid himself of Bernadotte, was by no means pleased at his sudden return. But Joseph again intervened, and the First Consul made the best of the situation. He could find no suitable command for the ambitious Gascon, so retained him for the time being in his rank of General-in-Chief without active service.

The prophecy of the Parisian fortune-teller having been so strangely fulfilled, Colonel Gerard persuaded his Chief, on his return to Paris, to pay a visit to the seer, to whom he introduced Bernadotte as a wealthy merchant who had important business enterprises in Germany, and wished to know if they were likely to succeed. "You

¹ Morrison, *Catalogue of Autograph Letters*, ii. 173. ² Sarrans, i. 49, cf. similar letter to Talleyrand, June 13, 1803, *Revue des Autographes*, 131.

are not a merchant, sir," said the prophetess, "but a soldier of high rank. You are a relative of the First Consul, who will be Emperor. Beware of quarrelling with him, for he will be very powerful, and will have the world at his feet—and you, sir, at a great distance from him will be King, yes, you will cross the sea to be King."¹

One is tempted to suspect that this Sibyl may have been as well informed about the identity of her chance visitors as fashionable fortune-tellers in all great cities have to be. It is just possible that Gerard prompted her to preach prudence to his unruly Chief. At all events, so far as her prophecy of Kingship across the seas was concerned, he could hardly have prompted her. The prediction was so remarkably fulfilled and the incident is so well authenticated, that no writer about Bernadotte could omit to notice it.

Bernadotte's departure on his American mission did not prevent his name from being bandied about in a manner which was not calculated to please the First Consul. Lord Whitworth, the English Ambassador, on his return to London, reported that Bonaparte had met with a carriage accident, and that people were discussing what would have happened, if it had been attended by fatal consequences. He added that opinion inclined to a revival of the Directory, or to the setting up of a Triumvirate of Generals consisting of Moreau, Masséna, and Bernadotte, and he stated that the latter solution was preferred, because a revival of the Directory would have been the signal for a European war, while it was thought that a Triumvirate of Generals might have had the effect of making other countries pause, for a while, at all events, before embarking in war.²

¹ Sarrans, i. 50-52.

² Cf. Sorel, vi. 296.

CHAPTER XII

THE EMPIRE MAY-JUNE 1804

"I did not promise him affection, but I promised him a loyal co-operation, and I shall keep my word."—*Bernadotte's account of his bargain with the Emperor.*

THE war against England, in anticipation of which Bernadotte had thrown up the Ambassadorship to the United States, did not come about. The First Consul was content to seize and occupy the Kingdom of Hanover. Bernadotte looked for this command; but General Mortier, one of Napoleon's trustiest watch-dogs, was preferred to him. For the next twelve months he remained in Paris without active employment. Since the Plot of the Placards he had been under a cloud, and had dropped into the background. General Moreau was now, more than ever, the most prominent figure in the ranks of the military opposition; but he was not a man of action or decision. Besides, he had some leanings towards Royalism. Here lay a line of cleavage between him and Bernadotte, who, however much he disliked the idea of a Napoleonic usurpation, would have infinitely preferred it to a Royalist restoration.

Madame Récamier has described a scene at a ball given by Madame Moreau in the winter of 1803, where it was noticed that the Bonapartes and their partisans were conspicuous by their absence. She was sitting apart with Bernadotte when General Moreau passed them. Bernadotte called him and said: "If I were in your place, I should go to-night to the Tuilleries and dictate to Bonaparte the conditions upon which he

should govern." He added, "With your popular name, you are the only one of us who can come forward with the support of a whole people—see what you can do, what we can do if led by you; and make up your mind to act." An animated conversation ensued, in the course of which Moreau declared that, while he did not think it necessary to provoke a movement, he was prepared to act, whenever a movement should take place. Bernadotte exclaimed, "Ah, you dare not take up the cause of liberty, and you say that Bonaparte would not dare to attack it. Very well, Bonaparte will make sport of Liberty and of you. It will perish and you will be included in its fall."¹

Moreau's notions of liberty were not the same as Bernadotte's, and the two men drifted apart. In January 1804 a Royalist Conspiracy came to a head; in which Moreau allowed himself to be compromised, with the result that he was arrested in February, and was included in the prosecution which ensued. The tribunal, which sentenced most of the prisoners to death imposed in Moreau's case a penalty of two years imprisonment. Napoleon never forgave the judges for their leniency, and, wishing to remove Moreau immediately from France, offered him the penalty of exile in lieu of imprisonment. General Moreau accepted the offer, and departed for America. Efforts were made to draw Bernadotte into this conspiracy, but he shrank from anything in the nature of a Royalist reaction. Besides, there were family influences at work.² Napoleon said at St. Helena that Désirée was instrumental in separating Bernadotte from Moreau and in bringing about a rapprochement between her husband and himself. He added that it was impossible for him to have had a better spy.³

¹ *Souvenirs de Madame Récamier*; Chateaubriand, *Mémoires*, cited by Pingaud, 59.

² Pingaud, 59; Madame de Stael, *Ten Years Exile*, 113.

³ Gourgaud, cited by Pingaud, 60.

Meanwhile, another of the series of grave incidents took place which preceded the foundation of the first Empire. This was the abduction and execution of the Duc d'Enghien. Although Bernadotte had no hand or part in this affair, it had an indirect influence upon the relations between him and Napoleon, because the execution of the Duc d'Enghien helped indirectly to draw the Republican party to Bonaparte's side, by definitely and irrevocably setting a gulf between him and the Monarchists. "He has burned his boats," "He is ours," were sayings attributed to Republicans of that day.¹ What they meant was, that they were now at last convinced that there was no danger of Bonaparte ever playing the part of General Monk and bringing back the Bourbons.

In the Spring of 1804, after the execution of d'Enghien and the institution of proceedings against Moreau, the issue became knit in the minds of men between a Napoleonic autocracy and a Bourbon Restoration. The Republic was played out; and no other choice remained.

The First Consul, who was informed by Désirée of all that was passing in her husband's mind, now took the initiative, and invited Bernadotte to a personal interview. Madame Récamier tells us that, when he received a summons to the Tuileries, he feared that, on account of his intimacy with Moreau, he was to be included in the pending prosecution, and that he afterwards gave her the following account of his interview with Napoleon. "Well," he said to her, "it is not quite what I expected, it is a treaty of alliance which Bonaparte wished to propose to me. Bonaparte said to me in his concise and peremptory style, 'You see that the question has been decided in my favour. The Nation has declared for me, but she has need of the co-operation of all her children. Will you march forward with me

¹ Miot de Melito (Eng. tr.) ii., 33 n.

and with France or will you hold apart?' " Bernadotte went on to say: " There was only one course for me to take. I did not promise him affection, but I promised him a loyal co-operation, and I shall keep my word."

Much to the same effect is another account of this "Treaty of Alliance" which comes from one of Bernadotte's officers,¹ according to whom Bonaparte said to Bernadotte that he gave him credit for having been honestly attached to the Republic, but that the Republic and the Republican party were a thing of the past, and that a reconstruction of France upon imperial lines was the only means of preserving the fruits of the Revolution. He foreshadowed an era of victory and conquest, in which he hinted that Bernadotte was to take a glorious part. He urged him to give a lead to the military malcontents, and set an example to the generals and officers who still hankered after the Republic. This was the special service which he wished him to render. The writer adds that Bernadotte assented to Napoleon's arguments and proposals without any pretence of enthusiasm, and without disguise of his regrets and disappointment.

On the 11th May Napoleon created fourteen Marshals and conferred the honorary rank of Marshal upon four distinguished Veterans. These eighteen batons were the supplements of his sceptre. The Marshals of France were designed to be an aristocracy which were to surround and support his throne. He thus associated with his own pre-eminent fame the lesser reputations which had gloriously emerged from the Revolutionary Wars. They were the satellites of his planetary system, which, without eclipsing him, were to enhance its splendour.

While the majority of the Marshals were men upon whose obedience Napoleon could rely, five of them were Republicans, and had been his declared opponents, namely, Masséna, Augereau, Jourdan, Bernadotte, and

¹ Sarrazin, *Phil.*, ii, 206 *et seq.*

Brune. Bernadotte was the only one who, besides being a soldier, possessed political influence both inside and outside the army. That was why he was the one with whom Napoleon found it worth his while to strike a bargain.

Upon the day on which the Empire was proclaimed, the Marshals were the first of his subjects to be received by their new Sovereign. Addresses were delivered by the principal among them. An eye-witness, describing the scene, says that Murat, Masséna, and Augereau were the first to speak, and that the Emperor listened with an air of indifference to the commonplace addresses of Murat and Masséna, and received with ill-disguised annoyance a rude warning from Augereau that "he must take care of the military men to whom he owed everything."

Then came the turn of Bernadotte, who made the following explicit declaration: "I thought for a long time, sire, that France could not be happy under any but a Republican form of government. To the sincerity of this conviction Your Majesty must attribute the conduct which I have pursued for more than three years. Enlightened by experience, I feel much satisfaction in assuring you, that my illusions are dissipated. I beg of you to be persuaded of my eagerness to execute any measures that Your Majesty may prescribe for the good of the country. I moreover declare to you, as well as to all my friends here present, that I share the sentiments which General Murat had just delivered you, in the name of the army, and that I do so in no mere formal or verbal way, but with my heart and soul."

Bonaparte seemed surprised and gratified at the manner in which Bernadotte had kept his word. He had been standing in his usual pose with his hands behind his back. He so far unbent as to press Bernadotte's hand, and after a pause replied: "General, the firm persuasion which I entertain that your tongue has always been the

faithful interpreter of your heart, renders the avowal, which you have had the goodness to make, of infinite value to me. It is only by a thorough union that we can hope to complete the glory, tranquillity, and prosperity of France. I beg you will henceforth consider me as your friend, as well as your Emperor."

Bernadotte in accordance with his promise lost no opportunity of displaying, in an unreserved manner, his adhesion to the Empire. With Murat and Masséna he took the lead in signing a roll of military men who rallied to the new order of things.¹ To the Republican officers who looked to him for guidance he declared that everything must have an end; that the Empire should serve to unite all good Frenchmen; and that it was loyal for him and for them to acknowledge their errors. These remarks met with the approval of most of his hearers; but there were murmurers. Among them was Moreau's friend, Lecourbe, who had signed the roll in order to retain his rank, but was heard to say bitterly: "Where is the Bernadotte of the Army of Sambre and Meuse and of the 18th Brumaire?"²

Bernadotte had kept his bargain by setting a useful example to a crowd of hesitating generals, and by publicly playing his part as a loyal subject of the New Cæsar. More than this Napoleon did not require from those of whom he said: "I made them my courtiers, but I never expected to make them my friends." He knew very well that Bernadotte had not rallied to the Empire until he had lost all hope of the Republic, and that he had only rallied regretfully. That was why he valued his adhesion. It was a striking proof of the complete success of all his well-laid plans.

¹ *Journal des Débats* May 13, 1804. ² Sarrazin, *Phil.*, ii. 206-242.

CHAPTER XIII

BERNADOTTE AND LUCIEN BONAPARTE

MAY 1804

"As a result there will be no more glory except near him, with him, by him, and unfortunately for him."—*Bernadotte writing to Lucien Bonaparte in reference to the institution of the Empire, May 1804.*

BERNADOTTE kept his bargain with Napoleon, and played his part effectively on the public stage as an adherent of the new Empire. Indeed, he had no alternative. The Emperor was now *de jure* and *de facto* his sovereign. It was too late to hark back upon the *vestigia morientis libertatis*. A Bonapartist dynasty was the only alternative to a Royalist restoration. Nevertheless, he was deeply mortified at the downfall of all his own ideals; and the person to whom he confided his chagrin was the Emperor's brother, Lucien.

Let us glance back at Lucien Bonaparte's relations with Napoleon and with Bernadotte while the Empire was in the making. His differences with Napoleon came to a head in October 1803, when he took a second wife. This was Madame Joubert, a beautiful and charming widow with a past in which he had played a part. Napoleon opposed the marriage and refused to recognise it. At his behest, all the Bonaparte family turned their backs upon Lucien and his bride, except Joseph and his wife Julie with whom General Bernadotte and Désirée associated themselves. The question of the succession to the new throne was on the tapis. Napoleon was willing that Lucien should take his place with his brothers in the line of succession, but refused to recognise his wife or any of his progeny. Lucien



MADAME JOSEPH BONAPARTE (Julie Clary)
Queen of Naples (1806). Queen of Spain (1808)



JOSEPH BONAPARTE
King of Naples (1806). King of Spain (1808)

replied indignantly: "My wife, my son, my daughter, we are all one," and made up his mind to return to Italy. To Joseph he wrote: "Do nothing to reconcile me with the First Consul. I go with hate in my heart." Bernadotte tried to dissuade him. "Flight," he exclaimed, "what folly! I tell you to resist, to resist. It is your duty. The man who gives up the game, loses it." "No, my dear fellow," said Lucien, "there is no game here for me to play. The stakes are too high." This was their last meeting.

At the time of the institution of the Empire Bernadotte unburdened himself to Lucien in a letter, which laid bare the real feelings which underlay the actor's mask. It is a remarkable document, and not the less so because it was addressed to Napoleon's brother.

"BERNADOTTE TO LUCIEN BONAPARTE.

"PARIS, May 1804.

"I take advantage, my dear Senator, of Doctor Paroisse's return to Italy, to have a frank talk with you, without exposing myself to the chances of the Post Office, which friend Fouché makes more risky every day. If it had not been for that consideration (which does not proceed from fear, I can assure you, for they are well aware of our community of sentiments) I should have written sooner, but I prefer that my letters should reach their destination, and I know that they forward nothing which displeases them.

"What do you say about the event of the moment? What do you think of the so-called organic *Senatus-Consultum*?¹ A pretty business that. Your monk Sieyès, who deluded both you and Joseph with his famous constitution, did not foresee this crown of his edifice. He must, however, have apprehended something of the kind, since he conceived the idea of what he called 'absorption,' a sort of metaphysical notion, which he designed in order to prevent a popular leader

¹ The *Senatus-Consultum* which declared Napoleon Emperor. It was presented to the Senate on 16th May, and voted on 18th May 1804.

from aspiring to, or seizing upon, power. But General Bonaparte, with good reasons, willed otherwise. In truth, instead of Bonaparte being absorbed, it is we poor soldiers, who have done nothing for our country as everyone knows except shed our blood for her, who have been literally 'absorbed.' As a result, there will be no more glory except near him, with him, by him, and unfortunately for him.

"Since it has pleased the sovereign people to despoil themselves in favour of an Emperor, it has doubtless been on an implied condition that he will give them peace. . . . And you will see how they will get it. It will be a case of 'Forward, soldiers, long live the Emperor,' instead of 'Long live the Republic.' That will be a far more effective battle-cry.

"You know, Lucien, that I am your friend, and that I did my best to dissuade you from surrendering your position and from abandoning public life. I told you on the night before your departure that the man who gives up the game loses it; and that instead of silently effacing yourself you had only to say the word, in order to revive what would deserve the name of a party.

"Your friends and mine say that you were guilty of weakness or of complicity with your brother. But I know that on the 19th Brumaire you only acted a fraternal part, when you ought to have had the courage to put to the vote, in your capacity of President of the Council of Five Hundred, the outlawry of that brother who violated by force of arms the national representation.¹ Yes, you betrayed your duty, and your republican conscience—because nobody knows better than you that the decree of outlawry was deserved. Have you no genuine admiration for those great men of antiquity, the two Brutuses and Timoleon? They were cases of father and son, and of brother and brother; and that is why their names will remain for ever celebrated. The General would not have been guilty of any such pusillanimity in your favour, if your situations had been reversed.

¹ For the course pursued by Lucien Bonaparte and by Bernadotte on the 18th and 19th Brumaire, see *The First Phase*, Chaps. LXXII and LXXIII.

"But have I any right to reproach you for not having imitated the grand models of patriotism of which history gives us examples, since I was found wanting also—thanks to the persuasion of Joseph? Why? Because Joseph is the husband of Julie, who is sister of my wife, Désirée. On such trifles depend the destinies of a great empire.

"You know that the Faubourg of St. Antoine was on my side. We had armies and we had men—who under my orders would not have been his tools. But no. Everything went wrong on that day. Weakness alone triumphed, thanks to you in the beginning, and thanks to me, for allowing myself to be captured by fine words. when perhaps I might have prevented it all.

"Nevertheless, I had begun to reconcile myself to the Consular Republic, although it was but a mutilated variety of the constitution of your Abbé. To-day it is gone. Now we are imperialised by a plebiscite. I wonder what the 'Canon of Chrone'¹ thinks of it. They say he has grown fat, while he laughs at you, me, and all the world, except the Emperor Napoleon and himself.

"If, in the Senate or outside of it, one of the old veterans of 1789 . . . had dared to say to a nation, which was intoxicated by the prestige of a glory, to which we had helped to accustom them: 'Pause, my friends. Do you wish to experience once more that royalty, which you drenched in the blood of the unfortunate Louis XVI' (your hypocritical Abbé can tell you about that),² 'well, deliver yourselves over hand and foot to an absolute despotism. Look at your neighbours, the English. After killing one king they took another. But he was a constitutional king, who if he could not do much good, could at least not do much harm.' Absolute monarchy is a master, which in its own interest requires to be disarmed. Nothing is more dangerous than absolute power, which produces those paroxysms that are called revolutions, of which kings are generally the first victims. . . .

They wish to see you far away from France. Rome is too near. . . . They would like to see you in the

¹ Sieyès. See Chap. I *supra*.

² Sieyès had voted for the execution of Louis XVI.

place¹ to which they have sent Moreau, whither they would perhaps also like to send me. I am holding my ground. I wish to obtain a certain command through Joseph, who retains some influence over Cæsar. Perhaps when I am at a distance, I shall no longer provoke hatred. In any case I am unwilling to repose under the shade of another's laurels. If I cannot do better I shall retire to America, perhaps to be followed by you.

"Farewell. Take care of your health in that fever-laden climate. Present my homage to Madame Lucien, and do not allow her to give way to the despondency, which General Lacour tells me has afflicted her. She is too beautiful and too good to excite the hatred of anyone; and she is too wise not to understand that she is only the pretext of your banishment. Napoleon would thank her, if he dared, for having furnished him with it.

"Good-bye, Lucien—*Au revoir*—when and where God pleases.
J. B. BERNADOTTE."²

This letter must have been written within a few weeks, perhaps within a few days, of the ceremony of the proclamation of the Empire, at which Bernadotte attorned so unreservedly to the new Emperor. If Napoleon had read this letter—as he would have done, if it had passed through the post—he would have been neither surprised nor annoyed. He understood the respective points of view of the writer and of the recipient, and that they sympathised and sided with each other. It mattered nothing to him what Bernadotte thought, or what he wrote to Lucien, so long as he kept his promise to co-operate loyally in the new order of things.

We are now in a position to summarise the evolution of Bernadotte's attitude during the Consulate. After the revolution of Brumaire, to which he had been the most prominent obstacle, he became Councillor of State, and General-in-Chief of the Army of the West; but he did not rally to the new constitution until his former

¹ U. S. A.

² *Lucien Bonaparte et ses Mémoires*, ii, 445.

colleagues had been reconciled to it, and until his followers had been amnestied. As time went on, he became dissatisfied with the odious duties to which he found himself relegated, and was aggrieved at being passed over for a succession of active commands; but he did not go into opposition until 1802, when Napoleon's reactionary policy and rapid advance towards absolute power began to manifest themselves. It was then that he became the leading spirit of the so-called Conspiracy of Paris, and that he incurred suspicion of complicity in the Conspiracies of Donnadieu and of Rennes. Despair led him to wish to find some honourable means of escape from France. He refused the Captain-Generalship of Guadeloupe and the Ambassadorship at Constantinople; but he would have gladly become Governor of Louisiana, if he had been given the means that were requisite for success. Afterwards he accepted the American Ambassadorship, but relinquished it in view of the imminence of a European war. For the next twelve months Bernadotte gradually realised that the Republic had ceased to exist, and that the choice lay between a Monarchical restoration and a Napoleonic empire. As soon as this issue became crystallised, he had no hesitation in making his choice. Having made his choice he resolved to serve the new *régime* with loyalty and good faith, but he did not conceal from his intimate friend, Lucien Bonaparte, how bitter were his disappointments and his regrets.

This picture is different from that of Bernadotte's apologists who paint him from first to last as the heroic "last of the Romans." But it is also far removed from the stagy caricature which some writers have presented, of a false and cunning conspirator, who fawned on his sovereign master and was ever ready to bite the hand that fed him. It is an anachronism to regard the First Consul as having been his sovereign, or to look upon resistance to the First Consul's ambitious designs as treason to the State. During the Consulate, Bonaparte

was at the head of a Republic which he had sworn to maintain. He was not yet Emperor of the French. However fatuous Bernadotte's defence of the Republic may have been, it was less reprehensible for him to defend it than for its chief to undermine it. It is because the First Republic was not worth preserving that Bernadotte's defence of it failed to attract the support of any large section of his countrymen, or to win the sympathy which history usually renders to those who, however unsuccessfully, have entered the lists in the name of freedom.

CHAPTER XIV

HANOVER—SIR GEORGE RUMBOLD—THE CORONATION 1804-1805

"Repeat with your Generals and with all good Frenchmen—'Long live the Emperor.'"—*Marshal Bernadotte's Order of the Day, June 1804.*

ONE of Napoleon's first acts as Emperor was to appoint Marshal Bernadotte to be Governor and Commander-in-Chief in the Electorate of Hanover. This episode in the Marshal's career has a special interest for English readers, because for nearly a century Hanover had been ruled by the same sovereign as Great Britain and Ireland until its occupation by the French in 1803 after the rupture of the Peace of Amiens. Napoleon had no intention of incorporating Hanover in his Empire; but he kept his grip upon it for three reasons. It enabled him to strike at England by excluding her commerce from North Germany; to maintain a French army at German cost; and to beguile the King of Prussia, who hankered after Hanover, by dangling that Electorate before his eyes.¹

On his way to his new post Bernadotte visited the French Camps at Boulogne and Ostend, where Marshal Davout happened to be in command. This chance visit led to a polite correspondence,² but not to a reconciliation. Davout, who was always a reliable servant of the powers that be, looked upon Bernadotte as a dangerous *frondeur*; while Bernadotte regarded Davout as a military policeman, and never forgave him for having set spies upon him in 1802. The two Marshals were allied in the same degree to the Imperial House,

¹ Sorel, vi. 310; Ross's *Napoleon I*, 426.

² Davout, par Madame de Blocqueville, ii., 416.

Bernadotte being married to the sister-in-law of Joseph Bonaparte, and Davout to the sister-in-law of the Princess Pauline. These marriage alliances had different results. Bernadotte, while maintaining an attitude of independence towards Napoleon, had become the intimate friend of all the other Bonapartes; while Davout, who was a commonplace personality, was a reliable henchman of the Emperor's, but remained outside the charmed circle of the imperial family. No two men of that day were more opposite in point of character and outlook.

The British Foreign Office, which naturally took a vigilant interest in Hanoverian affairs, was kept informed by Sir George Rumbold, their Minister at Hamburg, of the course of events in the neighbouring Electorate. In June 1804 Rumbold reported: "The French Army in Hanover has pronounced anathemas against Bonaparte on the taking of his new appellation (*i.e.*, of Emperor). The army is to be reinforced, and the command given to General Bernadotte, a nomination that augurs mischief for these countries." Three weeks later he announced Bernadotte's arrival at his post, attributing his appointment to the Emperor's desire to appease his discontent. He anticipated that Hanover would now be entirely handed over to "the rapacious administration of the French General," and that it would cost the Electorate two million and a half livres (£100,000) per month to pay Bernadotte's 27,000 men.¹ We shall find that Sir George Rumbold did not turn out to be a very true prophet.

The army's "anathemas" against the new imperialism received no encouragement from their new commander, who signalled his arrival at his post by issuing an Order of the Day calling on the troops to "repeat with your Generals and with all good Frenchmen, 'Long live the Emperor,'" and in celebrating the

¹ F.O. 33/25 and 33/26 (Rumbold's despatches Nos. 31, 34, 35, 39, 40, 42, 50, June and July 1804).

institution of the Empire by a *fête* at which he presented sabres and muskets of honour to distinguished soldiers. He then conceived the happy idea of having medals struck from the silver mines in the Hartz Mountains in honour of the Emperor, who wrote a cordial acknowledgement of the compliment.¹

Two incidents occurred in the Summer of 1804 which afforded Bernadotte opportunities of showing the sincerity of his determination to keep his promise to the Emperor. He refused to be nominated for the vacant Senatorship of the Department of Oise, on the ground that "the Emperor has conferred so much honour upon me, that I do not feel at liberty to accept any favours except from his hand." A few days afterwards he forwarded a petition from the inhabitants of Pau, praying that the historic Castle of Henri IV might be made an Imperial Palace, and wrote in a covering letter: "It would give me pleasure to think that my compatriots were to be afforded the opportunity of offering to Your Majesty the tribute of their attachment and devotion."² During his government of Hanover, which lasted sixteen months, Bernadotte's relations with the Emperor continued to be entirely smooth and satisfactory, as was nearly always the case when he was far away from his imperious master and was left in a position of comparative independence. Absence tended to reconcile them to each other, and distance served to draw them together.

In October Sir George Rumbold's despatches came to an abrupt end, owing to his sensational abduction, which it was Marshal Bernadotte's duty to carry out as Governor of Hanover. On 1st October Fouché wrote:—

FOUCHÉ TO BERNADOTTE

"I have strong evidence, Marshal, that an English Agent at Hamburg, Rumbold, has been following the same

¹ Sarrans, i. 53; *Corr. de Nap.*, 8013 (10th Sept. 1804).

² Lafosse, i. 306 n.

practice of *espionage* and intrigue which have excited the indignation of Europe against the Drakes and the Spencer Smiths. It is clear . . . that the British Government has dared to avow and even to systematize these tactics of conspiracy on the part of their ministers who are accredited to allied or neutral powers. In this way, their ministers are, so to speak, made conspirators, and are placed outside the common law of civilised nations. It is the express order of the Emperor that Mr. Rumbold be seized and that possession be taken of all papers found in his house. I therefore write you, Marshal, to take all steps necessary for carrying out that operation as promptly as possible. "FOUCHÉ."¹

In pursuance of these directions, on the night of the 24th October, Sir George Rumbold was seized at his villa on the banks of the Elbe and was conveyed to Paris. At Hanover he requested to be told whether he was to be shot at that place, or whether he was to be taken to France and then murdered. He had an interview with Bernadotte *en route*, and he reported to his government that he was well treated on his journey. In Paris he experienced an anxious time in the terrible Temple prison, where he was in fear of poison, and remained uncertain of what fate might be in store for him, until the King of Prussia asked the Emperor to release him "as a proof of friendship." It was remarked at the time that Napoleon might have retorted that Prussia had made no protest when England had laid hands at Hamburg on the Irish refugee, Napper Tandy. The Emperor being afraid of a rapprochement between Prussia and England, released Rumbold without saying anything about Napper Tandy, thus closing a grim incident in which Bernadotte had only carried out his orders.²

¹ F.O. State Papers 33/26. (Document enclosed in Nicholas' despatch dated 2nd November 1804). Cf. *Corr. de Nap.*, 8100.

² F.O. 33/26 (Nicholas' despatches, 30th Oct., 6th Nov.; Rumbold's Report, 20th Nov.).

On the 2nd December the Emperor was crowned at Nôtre Dame. Bernadotte came to Paris for the occasion, and figured in the procession carrying "the collar of the Emperor Napoleon."¹ In David's painting of the Coronation, he is seen standing on the left hand side of the throne beside the Emperor's stepson, Eugène Beauharnais. Madame Récamier mentions in her *Souvenirs* that she was interested in watching her friend, Marshal Bernadotte, in the *entourage* of the new throne.²

A few days afterwards, on the 5th December, Bernadotte took part in the ceremony of the distribution of Eagles to the regiments of the French Army—a more inspiring occasion, and one even more characteristic of the new era than the Coronation. To the regiments of the Imperial Army their Eagles became vantage-points of victory. Many a battle was won, and many a defeat was averted, by the response which his troops made in critical emergencies to the following appeal which the Emperor addressed to them on that memorable day: "Soldiers, behold your Eagles. They will always serve as your rallying point. They will be wherever your Emperor thinks necessary for the defence of your throne and your fatherland. You will swear to sacrifice your life in their defence, and to carry them always courageously on the road to victory. You will swear it."³

It was during his visit to Paris that Napoleon presented to Bernadotte a town house in the Rue d'Anjou, which had been purchased from General Moreau in Fouché's name with moneys taken from the police fund. The gift was carried out by the following letter dated Paris, 1st January 1805 :—

" M. FOUCHÉ, MINISTER OF POLICE.

" Having thought it proper to purchase Grosbois and

¹ *Histoire du couronnement de Napoléon I^{er}*, 160.

² *Souvenirs de Madame Récamier*, i. 110; Herriot, i. 113.

³ *Corr. de Nap.*, 8203.

the house in the Rue d'Anjou from the family of General Moreau, and desiring to recognise the good services of Marshals Berthier and Bernadotte, I write this letter to command you to have a conveyance in due form made of these properties, Grosbois to Marshal Berthier, and the house in the *Rue d'Anjou* to Marshal Bernadotte, so that they may have immediate possession of them in their present state (*dans l'état ou elles sont*).

"NAPOLEON."¹

The words "in their present state" explain what ensued. Some unauthorised person proposed to appropriate the furniture and fittings. Bernadotte protested, and the point was decided in his favour.

Napoleon now proceeded to extend the operations and usefulness of the Legion of Honour as an instrument of government and of diplomacy. The Marshals were decorated with the Grand Cordon, and the Empire was divided into sixteen territorial cohorts, of one of which Marshal Bernadotte was appointed Chief.²

An exchange was then arranged between the King of Prussia and the Emperor Napoleon, of seven Prussian Black Eagles to be conferred upon the Emperor and six distinguished Frenchmen in return for seven Golden Eagles of the Legion of Honour to be conferred upon the King and six distinguished Prussians. In accordance with custom, Napoleon named the recipients of the Prussian Eagles. Three of them were given to Marshals, and the Emperor selected Murat, Berthier, and Bernadotte for this honour.³ This is the second occasion, within the first year of the existence of the Empire, that the Emperor selected Berthier and Bernadotte as the objects of special favour next after his own brothers and brother-in-law.

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, 8249.

² The Chiefs were all Marshals, except in the case of the Cohort of which the centre was the naval base, Toulouse, of which Admiral Decrès was appointed Chief.

³ *Le Moniteur* An XIII, 1024.



GUSTAVUS IV

Born 1778 ; succeeded as King of Sweden 1792 ; deposed 1809 ; died 1837

This incident of the Prussian Eagles led to a quarrel between the King of Prussia and Gustavus IV of Sweden, who sent back his Black Eagle to the King with the declaration that he would not share the honour with "Napoleon and his crew."¹ The whirligig of time had a strange revenge in store for Gustavus, who little thought that one of the "crew" was destined to supplant him on his throne.

¹ Rose's *Napoleon*, ii. 4.

CHAPTER XV

BERNADOTTE'S GOVERNMENT OF HANOVER 1804-1805

" Marshal Bernadotte's nobility of character, his generosity and his humanity were so universally recognised that the inhabitants of Hanover preferred a French occupation under him to a Prussian occupation which they had just reason to apprehend."—*Herr Timme, a Hanoverian Minister, in reference to Bernadotte's administration of Hanover.*

BERNADOTTE was singularly successful in administering Hanover and in conciliating the inhabitants. Yet his task was a difficult one. He was holding a foreign country with an army of occupation numbering nearly 30,000 men. He had orders to supply himself locally with all the money necessary for the relief of his army, and at the same time to destroy one of the principal sources of local revenue by prohibiting trade with England. Although it was his duty to execute arbitrary decrees and to carry out high-handed proceedings, he managed to win so much esteem as to make his government of Hanover the first stage in a path which led him straight to the throne of Sweden.

An Hanoverian Minister has written of Bernadotte that " his nobility of character, his generosity and his humanity were so universally recognised, that the inhabitants preferred a French occupation under him to a Prussian occupation which they had good reason to apprehend."¹ We shall come across another remarkable tribute to Bernadotte's methods of governing Hanover, from the pen of the Russian General Bennigsen, who came of Hanoverian stock.²

The secret of Bernadotte's success as an administrator

¹ Herr Timme cited by Pingaud ; *cf. Journal de L'Empire*, Oct. 4th, 1805.

² Chap. XXVII *infra*.

lay in his possession of a combination of qualities such as are seldom found together. Unwavering in his enforcement of order and discipline he was gracious and generous towards everyone beneath him. He was an earnest student and a ready learner of the real causes of local prosperity and contentment, and at the same time played his public part with such *aplomb* and dexterity as to win popularity and good-will on all sides.

The French Governor occupied the town palace, and the country Castle of Herrenhausen, recently the residence of the Duke of Cambridge, the English Viceroy. He incurred criticism for the splendour of his Court, on account of which Napoleon is said to have sent a letter of reproof and then to have recalled the courier, so anxious was he at this time to avoid a quarrel.¹

The Marshal made a favourable impression everywhere. The local newspapers described him as "a man of forty-one who looks thirty-seven, middling tall, slight, with thick black hair and dark eyebrows, expressive and energetic features, and manners which are courteous, agreeable, and benevolent." As an example of his courteous behaviour, a German writer quotes a passage from a letter in which an Hanoverian lady, writing to a friend, mentioned that when at a review the horses of her carriage shied and plunged, endangering the safety of the occupants, Marshal Bernadotte, who happened to be standing near, mounted his horse and galloped away to stop the firing. It is needless to say that the writer had a good word for so gallant a Governor.²

The Marshal seized an early opportunity of gaining the confidence of the educated classes. To a petition from the University of Göttingen he replied: "You can count on the protection of the French Army. It will do nothing to impair the prosperity of your University. On the contrary, it will take pleasure in guaranteeing the absolute security of the students who are attracted

¹ Jung, *Bonaparte et son Temps*. ² Hans Klaeber, 147, 148.

to your halls by the fame of your learning." As a result of his protection the University recovered ground which it had lost owing to the unsettled state of the country since the French occupation. For example, we find a former patron renewing his benefactions and writing to his old Alma Mater: "To-day you have General Bernadotte as Governor, and all that I know of him assures me that I can now safely revert to my former way of discharging the debt of gratitude which is due from your always affectionate pupil." The University was completely won over by the attitude of the French Governor, and whenever he visited Göttingen, Bernadotte was received by a deputation of dignitaries and professors, who welcomed him as their protector.¹

- Bernadotte had an effective way of staging his acts of clemency. On the eve of his departure to attend the Coronation of the Emperor, a plot, which was directed against the French Government, was discovered, and a prominent Hanoverian named Hedeman was arrested. As the Governor entered his carriage to set out on his journey to Paris, Hedeman's two daughters came to affirm their father's guiltlessness, and to present a petition for his release. Bernadotte read the petition and replied that he "could not believe in Hedeman's innocence, but that he had looked into the matter, and, in view of the hopelessness of the plot, and of the invulnerable strength of the French Army, he would grant their prayer, with a warning that their father should be more prudent in future."²

The Marshal took particular pleasure in cultivating the military society of Hanover, which included officers who had fought in the Seven Years War under Frederick the Great, and veterans who had stood in the square

¹ Lafosse, i. 298, 299.

² Lafosse, i. 303, 304. (Bernadotte's incredulity was justified, since it now appears that Col. Hedeman was in regular correspondence with the English Government. F.O. State Papers 64/65 Prussia.)

which Marshal Saxe, with the help of his Irish Brigade, had broken at Fontenoy. He flattered these old warriors with harangues in which he compared their regiments to "columns inflexibly welded as if by a Roman cement," and to "human rocks which might be demolished but could never be disintegrated."¹

One of his military gasconades is the subject of an anecdote which has been related in different forms. At all events it appears that some incident of the following kind occurred. At a *levée* an old German officer, General Von Gonheim, being aware that the Marshal had served in the ranks of the Royal-la-Marine Regiment, recalled the fact that in India at the Siege of Cuddalore he had nursed in his tent a French prisoner, a young sergeant of that Corps, and expressed his disappointment at never having heard from him since. The Marshal without hesitation assumed the character of the young sergeant, apologised for his forgetfulness, and overwhelmed the old General with marks of gratitude and favour.

The incident caused such a sensation that the story of Bernadotte having been nursed by General Von Gonheim at Cuddalore was repeated everywhere, and passed into history.² It transpired afterwards that, when the Marshal retired after the *levée*, his Staff Officers remarked that they had been surprised to hear from him for the first time that he had served in India. Bernadotte laughingly admitted that it was the first time that he himself had heard of it, and explained his gasconade by saying that he wished to rescue his old regiment from the imputation of ingratitude, and to discharge the obligation which his fellow-sergeant owed to Von Gonheim.³ This story is so characteristic of Bernadotte that we may unhesitatingly accept it.

¹ Lafosse, i 291.

² See Wilks, *Sketches of Southern India*; Lord Cornwallis's correspondence, ii. 63; *Quarterly Review*, October 1817, page 62.

³ Sarrans, i. 55.

It would be a mistake to suppose that Bernadotte's success as ruler of Hanover was due merely to his Gascon adroitness, or to the agreeable impression which his personality created. It was, in the main, the fruit of his careful attention to local requirements, and of his vigilant care for the material prosperity of the people. He was far ahead of his contemporaries in his recognition and in his study of the economic basis of a people's happiness.

Shortly after his arrival in Hanover the Marshal addressed to the civil authorities an elaborate series of interrogatories covering the whole ground of national production, revenue, taxation, and indebtedness; and he promised that "if his questions were answered with frankness and with good faith, the necessity for rigorous measures would be obviated, the tranquillity of the Electorate would be assured, and the Marshal would live among them treating them as a friendly people, and abandoning himself to the hope of being able to make them forget the miseries of war."¹ Whatever misgivings the Hanoverian authorities may have felt, when they responded to this summons, they experienced an agreeable surprise. Bernadotte used the information which he received as to the material resources of the country for the purpose of lightening its burdens.

The Marshal's main difficulty was caused by the needs of his troops. The Emperor always expected his armies to be supported by the countries which they occupied, and was in the habit of insisting that no charge for that purpose should be thrown upon the Imperial Exchequer. He wrote to the Minister of War on 17th August 1804: "Tell Marshal Bernadotte to supply himself with the money necessary for the needs of the Army. The Hanoverians are clever at making a poor mouth."²

Napoleon did not believe in conciliatory methods of

¹ Lafosse, i. 286. ² *Corr. de Nap.*, 7911; cf. 8178.

managing conquered countries. He is often found reproving his satraps for "paying court" to his subjects. For example, writing in August 1805 to the Governor of Genoa he observed: "Have you harboured the hope that you can govern these people without discontenting them. . . . I tell you that in matters of government force means justice as well as virtue."¹ But he was anxious to humour Bernadotte, and he did so by enabling him to gratify his wish of tempering the wind of adversity to the Hanoverians. It must be added that the Emperor was only "robbing Peter to pay Paul;" for the Hanoverians appear to have been relieved by forced loans and exactions from other conquered territories. It was on this account that a royalist critic² described Marshal Bernadotte as being at the same time "*pillard et généreux*."

In the Autumn of 1804 a sum of 800,000 francs which had been exacted by Napoleon from the North German Principality of Bentheim was about to be paid into the Imperial Treasury. Bernadotte appealed to the Emperor to apply it to the relief of the Hanoverian finances. Surprise was expressed in official circles in Paris when the Emperor yielded to Bernadotte's pressure and diverted the £30,000 from his Treasury to the support of the Marshal's army; and it was regarded as a proof of the Emperor's desire to win the unreserved adhesion of the "obstacle man" to the new order of things.³ When, however, the Marshal proposed with the same object in view to cede to the Elector of Hesse-Cassel the town of Minden, Napoleon dismissed the suggestion with the following comment:

"It would appear more suitable to demand a year's

¹ *Ib.*, 9064. ² Count d'Antraigues, cited by Pingaud, 68.

³ Jung, *Bonaparte et son Temps*; and see Fouché's letter in *Journal des Débats*, 6th November 1804.

revenue from the farmers of the English domains. On no account must there be any negotiation with the Elector of Hesse-Cassel upon such a subject.

"NAPOLEON." ¹

In the early months of 1805 there was great distress in North Germany. Bernadotte assisted the people of Hanover out of the military stores, visited the suffering districts, and resorted to every available source of relief. His efforts in this direction were known and recognised in England. Our Foreign Office was informed early in March that Bernadotte had represented to the Emperor the necessity of diminishing the number of troops in Hanover owing to its impoverished condition, and that the Emperor had refused to make any diminution of troops.² Bernadotte, however, was not to be denied, and the Emperor, yielding to his pressure, wrote on the 17th March:—

"MY COUSIN,—. . . I have given orders authorising you to obtain from the united departments 200,000 cwts. of wheat to provision the Electorate. Take care that none of it finds its way to England. I have diminished your army by three regiments. This reduction of your forces will to some extent relieve your finances. . . .

"NAPOLEON." ³

Napoleon's desire to conciliate Bernadotte in 1804 and 1805 was exhibited less in the gift of the House in the Rue d'Anjou, or in the bestowal of cordons, than in the departure which he made from his usual system by co-operating with him in relieving the finances of the Governor's province. Very few of the satraps of that day would have been gratified at receiving favours of this kind, or would have been able to obtain them.

In the summer of 1805, Napoleon was encamped at

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, 8178.
1277, 1319, 1399.

² F. O. 33/27; cf. *Le Moniteur An.* xiii,
³ *Corr. de Nap.*, 8446.

Boulogne, and England was expected to be the object of attack. Intelligence was received at the Foreign Office that Arthur O'Connor was negotiating an invasion of Ireland; and that General Bernadotte's name was mentioned as the possible commander of an army which was to embark from Holland.¹ In the previous September Napoleon had contemplated an expedition under Augereau and Marmont which was to land in Lough Swilly, in County Donegal; and was to march on Dublin, while the main attack was made from Boulogne upon the shores of Kent.² Napoleon's correspondence suggests that he was threatening a descent upon the coasts of Ireland as a diversion to draw away the English fleet from continental waters. At all events these rumours of descents in the British islands came to nothing.³ War was imminent, but not against England.

¹ F. O. 27/71 (Secret Intelligence received 30th June 1805).

² *Corr. de Nap.*, 8048, 8063.

³ *Ib.*, 8856, 8870, 8938, 8953 (7th to 27th June 1805).

CHAPTER XVI

THE CAMP AT BOULOGNE—THE GRAND ARMY—THE RENDEZVOUS IN GERMANY

AUGUST—SEPTEMBER 1805

"The Austrians little know how quickly I can make 200,000 men pirouette."—*Napoleon at Boulogne, August 1805.*

"You know the friendship and esteem I bear you."—*Napoleon to Bernadotte, September 1805.*

WHILE Bernadotte was governing Hanover, Napoleon was organising the Camp at Boulogne. His ostensible object was to invade England; but it is doubtful how far such an invasion was a serious project, or a pretext for collecting an army with a view to a Continental war. Perhaps it began as a project, and became a pretext when Napoleon realized that Austria was preparing to pick up the gauntlet which he had thrown down by declaring himself King of Italy. Writing to Talleyrand from Boulogne on 25th August he said: "The Austrians little know how quickly I can make 200,000 men pirouette."¹ It was then that in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, he wheeled round, turned his back upon "*perfidie Albion*" and his face towards the Rhine. The results of many months of careful preparations were exhibited, when he suddenly called into existence, as with the wave of a magician's wand, that mighty instrument of conquest and of glory, the Grand Army.²

The Grand Army was the military wonder of that age.

¹ Alombert et Colin, i.

² The Grand Army was given that name on 25th August 1805, *ib.*, 218.

Yet it comprised less than 200,000 troops, and was widely dispersed. It consisted of seven corps numbered according to their geographical position from East to West. On the extreme left were Bernadotte's Army in Hanover, and the Army of Holland commanded by General Marmont. These two corps were to compose the left wing of the Grand Army and were to concentrate at Wurzburg under the general command of Marshal Bernadotte. The other corps under Davout, Soult, Lannes, Ney, and Augereau, with the cavalry under Murat, were to range themselves along the Rhine between Mannheim and Strasburg.

The main object of Napoleon's strategy was to overwhelm the Austrians, who were collected under General Mack in the neighbourhood of Ulm, before they could unite with the Russians who were marching to Mack's relief. In order to avoid putting the enemy on their guard, he was at pains to conceal the real object of his movements. The following letter from Marshal Berthier, the Chief of the Staff, to Marshal Bernadotte shows how careful he was to screen his operations: "Your movements in the present state of public opinion will attract curiosity. You will therefore be careful to announce that it is your intention to winter in Hanover. In fact, after reviewing your troops at Göttingen you will return immediately to your capital. The Emperor cannot leave you in ignorance of the fact that negotiations are pending with Prussia . . . and that it is necessary to put that Court on the wrong scent, so that they may not realise the Emperor's plan of collecting all his forces."¹ Soon afterwards he was again reminded of the necessity of cloaking the object of his march: "You will announce," wrote Berthier, "that you are returning to France, and that other troops will relieve the Army of Hanover. Never mind what they think.

¹ Alombert et Colin, i. 163, 164 (26th August 1805).

This is the line of conversation which you are to adopt everywhere." ¹

It appears from despatches of the British Agents at Berlin and at Hamburg that these wary diplomats noticed the Marshal's acts of mystification without being deceived by them. On 6th September, Thornton reported that Marshal Bernadotte was procuring the insertion in the Hamburg newspapers of incorrect announcements about his movements. Thornton was unable to probe the truth; but Jackson was better informed at Berlin; for we find him on 10th September informing his Government that "Bernadotte's Army is destined to join Marmont's and to act against Austria." ² A few days afterwards this prophecy was verified.

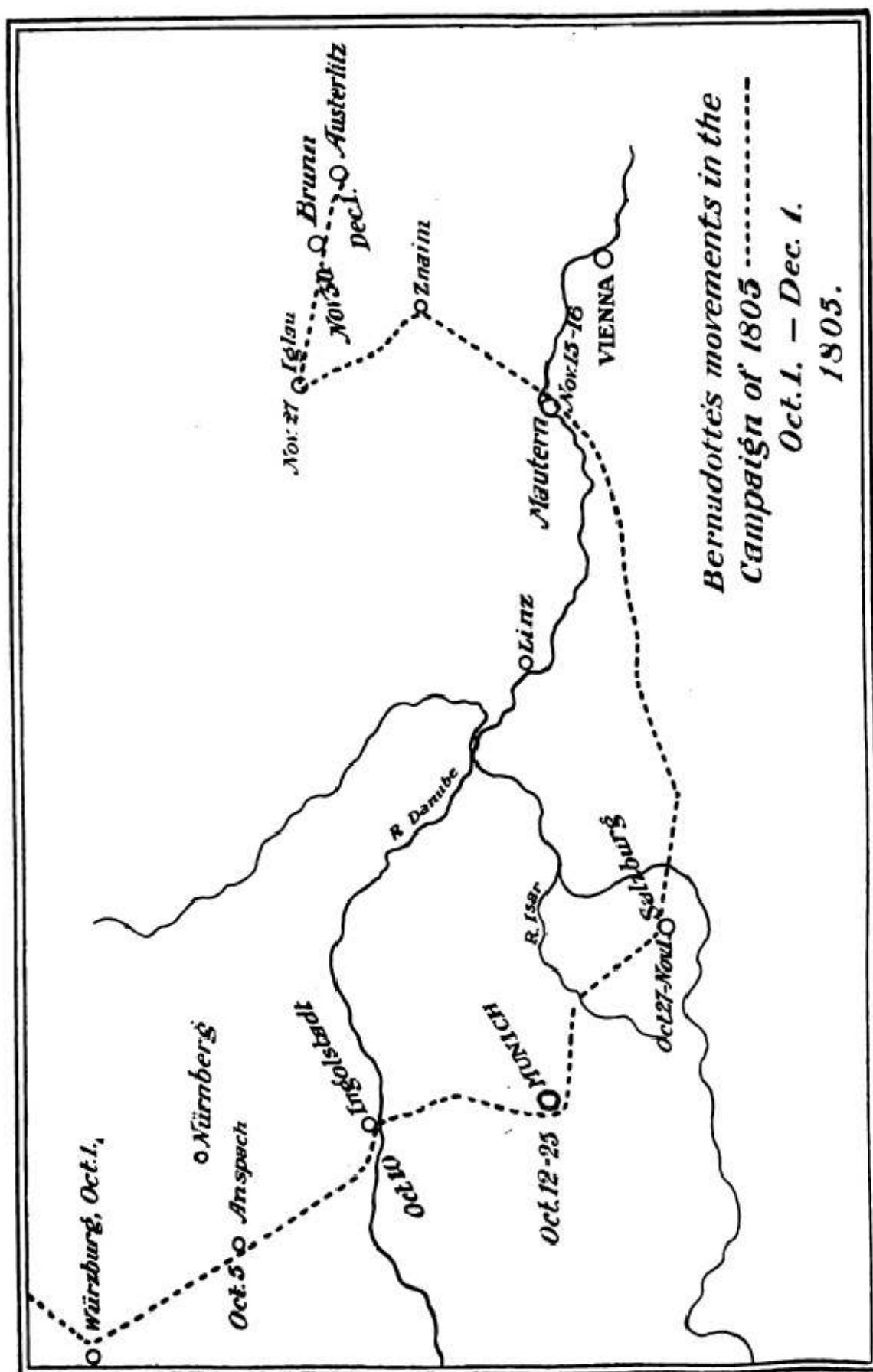
In the march from Hanover to Wurzburg it was necessary to pass through the neutral territory of the Elector of Hesse-Cassel, who, becoming alarmed at the massing of troops on his northern frontier, demanded an explanation. Bernadotte replied that he "was merely forming an army of observation in that quarter;" and when the time came to cross the frontier, he requested "a passage for his troops through Hessian territory to return to France," which was granted.³ At Cassel, he marched at the head of his troops past the Elector, who was so captivated by the Marshal's courtesies that he wrote to him: "I shall always retain a regard for you and for the great and noble qualities which distinguish you." ⁴ Napoleon, however, was not so appreciative of Bernadotte's methods. He blamed him for troubling himself about the Elector and his subjects. "You spoiled him," wrote Napoleon, "if it is true that you paid ready money. If I had foreseen it, I would have told you to pay in goods. He knows quite well that but for France he would be the subject of Prussia"

¹ *Ib.*, 222 (5th September 1805).

² F. O. 33/29 (Hamburg); 64/68 (Prussia).

³ F. O. 64/68 (Prussia).

⁴ Alombert et Colin, ii. 138.



Marshal Bernadotte's movements from Hanover to Austerlitz Sept. 5, Dec. 1, 1805

In truth, the Elector of Hesse-Cassel was between the devil and the deep sea.

On his arrival at Wurzburg, Bernadotte had to meet and to manage another German Sovereign, who, like the Elector of Hesse-Cassel, found himself between a devil and a deep sea. It was the same "devil," but a different "deep sea." This was the Elector of Bavaria, who, having been expelled from his own dominions by the Austrians, had been driven into the arms of Napoleon.¹ He had come to Wurzburg with 20,000 Bavarian troops who were to be placed under the command of Marshal Bernadotte, and to be used in the first instance for the reconquest of Bavaria, and the restoration of the Elector to his dominions.

The following letter dated 27th September awaited the Marshal at Wurzburg :—

NAPOLEON TO BERNADOTTE.

"From Wurzburg you will make for the Danube in accordance with instructions which the Minister of War will send you this evening. . . . I have made an offensive and defensive alliance with the Elector of Bavaria. His Army is at my disposal. . . . You are by this time at Wurzburg, and the Elector's fears must be at an end. You know the esteem and friendship I bear you. Now is the moment to strike a decisive blow. Before the 20th of Vendemiaire (12th October) Austria will be defeated.

"NAPOLEON." ²

Bernadotte found the Elector anxiously expecting him. The Electress, who was very anti-French, had abandoned herself to tears and distress. The Bavarian officers sympathised with the Electress; and the British Agent at Ratisbon reported to his Government that they were throwing up their commissions in order to avoid having to fight for the French.³ The Bavarian army

¹ Alombert et Colin, i. 438 (Letter of 6th September 1805, Berthier to Bernadotte). ² *Corr. de Nap.*, 9274, cf. 9277.

³ F. O. (Bavaria) 9/30 (Despatch from Horne, 22nd October 1805).

compared unfavourably with the French in respect of order, punctuality, and obedience. Bernadotte, who was a strict disciplinarian, never learned to like them, and was never liked by them. From Wurzburg Bernadotte reported his impressions to the Emperor from whom he received the following reply dated 21st October:—

NAPOLEON TO BERNADOTTE.

" MY COUSIN,—I have received your letter of 28th September. I am pleased to hear of your arrival at Wurzburg and your junction with General Marmont. I am not surprised that you found the Elector and Electress much agitated. The Electress has always been our enemy, and the Elector finds himself in such an extraordinary position, that it is not surprising that he is upset. Reassure him; talk to him about the movements of the Army; and encourage him to hope for a speedy restoration to his natural position. . . . I wish very much to see you and I shall arrange to do so when I know what the enemy are going to do. . . .

" NAPOLEON." ¹

To this friendly letter Bernadotte sent a cordial reply:—

BERNADOTTE TO BERTHIER

" His Majesty has been so good as to inform me of the movements of the Grand Army. I request you, Marshal, to assure him on my behalf, that I shall make every effort to second him. I offer to His Majesty the homage of unflagging zeal, and of a devotion the most respectful and the most absolute.

" MARSHAL BERNADOTTE." ²

It has been the fashion, in some quarters, to represent Bernadotte as setting the example of jealousy or ill-will towards his colleagues.³ At Wurzburg we find him

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, 9312.

² Alombert et Colin, iii. 284.

³ The present writer has not been able to find any evidence of ill-will exhibited on Bernadotte's part towards his brother Marshals, save towards Marshals Berthier and Davout. The differences which Masséna had in Spain with Ney and Soult are well known. Cf. *Lefebvre* par Wirth, 315.

displaying good feeling towards General Marmont, the Commander of the Second Army Corps, who was chagrined when he found that his corps was to be merged in the Left Wing. Bernadotte wrote to Berthier asking that Marmont might be allowed to retain his separate command. The following is the passage in his letter of 1st October bearing upon the subject :—

BERNADOTTE TO BERTHIER

"I was much touched, Marshal, by the Emperor's mark of confidence in conferring upon me the supreme command of all the troops collected here. I shall do all in my power to justify his selection. But I feel bound to avow frankly that this arrangement may not have all the results which he might anticipate. General Marmont is full of valour and ambition to distinguish himself. He has felt disappointed after commanding-in-chief to find himself in a subordinate position. I must do him the justice to say that I have no grounds whatever for any complaint against him. He has shown every willingness to execute any orders I may have to give him. I have had a private explanation with him. That is why I write to you on the subject. If the corps which I command is destined to operate separately on the Left Wing of the Grand Army, I think it would be for the advantage of His Majesty's Service that General Marmont should be independent.

"MARSHAL BERNADOTTE."

The request contained in this letter was refused ; and the command of the whole Left Wing, comprising one-fourth of the Grand Army, was left in Bernadotte's hands.¹

The standard history of the campaign contains several instances of want of harmony among the other Marshals, and of the complaints which they made against each other or against the general Staff. Soult is found blaming Ney for lagging on the march, and Davout for intercepting his supplies. Murat is found complaining

¹ Alombert et Colin, ii. 156, 157, 348, 350.

that Lannes blocked his advance by not evacuating Rastadt at his approach ; and that Berthier sent him orders which were full of contradictions. Soult and Davout are found imputing to Berthier mistakes in the Staff directions, which caused a crossing of their respective routes.¹

Military writers have been tempted to wonder what might have been the issue of this campaign if any accident had prevented the Emperor from reaching the rendezvous. Nothing seemed impossible for the Grand Army when led by the Emperor ; but there was always a danger of the machinery getting out of gear, when he was absent in body or in mind.

¹ Alombert et Colin, ii. 62, 63.

CHAPTER XVII

WURZBURG—MUNICH—ULM—THE PLAIN OF AUSTERLITZ OCTOBER—NOVEMBER 1805

"I shall esteem myself fortunate if your Majesty deigns to be satisfied with my zeal and absolute devotion."—*Bernadotte to Napoleon, October 1805.*

At the end of September 1805 the Grand Army occupied a line from Wurzburg to Strasburg facing in an easterly direction. On 1st October Napoleon, with the same surprising suddenness which he had displayed at Boulogne in the previous month, made his army "pirouette" southwards, and march straight for the Danube. During this movement Marshal Bernadotte was in command of the Left Wing, numbering about 60,000 men, and comprising the First and Second Army Corps and the Bavarians.

The first stage of Bernadotte's march was occupied in violating neutral territory by crossing the Prussian province of Anspach. It is difficult at the present day to realize the widespread indignation which was aroused in October 1805 by the violation of the neutrality of Anspach. It was apropos of that incident that Simon Woronzoff said of Napoleon, "Avec toutes les qualités d'un vrai scélérat qu'il possède en perfection, il finira mal faute de bon sens." This breach of international law created such indignation at the Court of Berlin, as to drive Prussia, in spite of pending differences about Poland, into an alliance with Russia. Napoleon deliberately incurred this risk for overwhelming strategic

reasons, and, by doing so, accelerated the combined movement to the Danube by several days.¹

The crossing of Anspach was carried out in an orderly and punctilious fashion which presents a contrast to some modern instances of violated neutrality. Not a blow was struck ; not a drop of blood was shed. Bernadotte in his letters to Berthier describes how he parried the threats and protests of the Prussian president of Anspach and of his Councillors of State ; how he humoured them by avoiding the principal town of the province ; how he availed himself of the aid of some old friends whom he met, and of some new friends whom he made ; and how by his diplomatic wiles he went far towards conciliating the Government and people. "I leave nothing undone," he wrote, "to make our passage of Anspach as little burdensome as possible. I bivouac only on lands where the harvest has been saved. I pay for everything at full price in ready money. I employ money, caresses, friendships, everything ; and I strive to inconvenience as little as possible His Prussian Majesty's subjects. I have succeeded well so far and have received no complaints." ²

Having "made history in his march," ³ and having crossed the Danube at Ingoldstadt on 7th October, Bernadotte advanced rapidly, using the Bavarians as a vanguard to lead the way into their own country. On 12th October he occupied Munich, driving out the Austrians and taking 1,600 prisoners and nineteen guns. During the next fortnight he had his headquarters at the Bavarian capital. His function was to keep the

¹ Alombert et Colin, ii. 26, 27 ; iii. 850 ; iv. 8, 9 ; *Lettres Inédites de Talleyrand à Napoléon*, 202 ; Bennigsen, i. 29 ; F. O. 64/69, 1805 (Jackson's despatch from Berlin, 7th October, giving a detailed account of the crossing of Anspach and of the indignation which it occasioned at the Prussian Court).

² Alombert et Colin, ii. 703, 762, 826.

³ *Rose's Napoleon*, ii. 21.

Russians at bay, while Napoleon was disposing of Mack.¹

In the course of his advance upon Ulm we find Napoleon instructing his Chief of the Staff to reproach Ney with failure of duty: "The Emperor ordered you," wrote Berthier, "to occupy the bridge and the height of Elchingen. You have done neither one nor the other. How could you have acted so? You only sent one battalion . . . although the enemy had three. Such skirmishes only serve to inspire them . . . to upset our best plans, and to re-animate a discouraged enemy."² Ney replied next day by winning the brilliant victory of Elchingen, which was quickly followed by the capitulation of Ulm.

Mack, when he met Napoleon after the capitulation, attributed his defeat to the advantage in point of time which Napoleon had gained by Bernadotte's violation of the neutrality of Anspach; and added that, if he himself had chosen to violate Prussian neutrality at another point, he might have escaped. Napoleon asked why he had not done so. "Because," said Mack, "we do not dare to take the liberties which your Majesty's preponderating power enables you to take." It looks as if they both recognised the application to neutral territory of the doctrine which has since become familiar, that "Might is Right." The incident also reminds us of the force of the Czartoryski's *mot*, that "Napoleon was the only man in Europe who knew the value of time."³

On the day after the capitulation of Ulm, Nelson fought the great naval battle of Trafalgar, which freed the British Isles from any fear of invasion, opened innumerable gates to British imperial expansion, and limited Napoleon's dreams of world-wide power to the comparatively narrow confines of the European continent.

The manœuvre of Ulm occupied a fortnight, during

¹ Alombert et Colin, iii. 282-286, 423-426, 651.

² Alombert et Colin, iii. 72, 698. ³ Alombert et Colin, iii. 850, 851.

which Bernadotte experienced considerable anxiety at Munich, and was heard to criticise the Emperor for leaving him with a wholly inadequate force to cope with 40,000 Russians and 25,000 Austrians. But Napoleon knew better; and the Russians and Austrians kept at a respectful distance while Bernadotte held all the military roads and approaches. It is said that the reason why the Russians were late in their movement upon Vienna, was a confusion between the Russian and the Gregorian Calendars.¹ There is a difference between them of twelve days, for which allowance was not made. If so, Bernadotte had luck on his side.

At Munich, where the Elector was re-established on his throne, all went smoothly, except that Marshal Davout, whose corps was quartered at Dachau, about twelve miles away, complained of the preference given to Bernadotte in assigning to him the command of the attack upon Munich. Berthier replied that the Emperor would have sent him to Munich if it had not been for the weakness of his artillery, and added: "The Emperor will take the first opportunity of giving your troops an opportunity of distinguishing themselves."²

That Bernadotte and his corps were full of ardour is proved by a despatch dated 20th October:—

BERNADOTTE TO NAPOLEON

"I cannot close this despatch without again assuring your Majesty of the excellent spirit which animates the troops which you have placed under my command. I paraded them yesterday, in order to announce the astounding victory which Your Majesty has won near Ulm. They received the news with cries of 'Long live the Emperor.' They displayed the keenest impatience for the march, and I am not exaggerating when I assure your Majesty that they burn with the desire to signalize themselves under your Majesty's eyes."³

¹ Rose, ii. 20.

² Alombert, 20, Alombert et Colin, iii. 818, 935, 994.

³ Alombert et Colin, iii. 999, 1000.

This despatch crossed the following letter written on 19th October :—

NAPOLEON TO BERNADOTTE

"MY COUSIN,—The garrison of Ulm will lay down their arms to-morrow at three o'clock. . . . The Austrian Army is entirely destroyed. The turn of your army and of the Bavarians will come next. I shall leave to-morrow myself. "NAPOLEON."¹

Napoleon reached Munich on 24th October and ordered the Grand Army to march forthwith upon Vienna. It consisted of about 150,000 men divided into five army corps under Bernadotte, Davout, Soult, Lannes, and Marmont, with Murat in command of the cavalry. The following was Bernadotte's parting letter :—

BERNADOTTE TO NAPOLEON

"MUNICH, 26th October 1805.

"SIRE,—I have received the order for the march which the Minister for War sent me yesterday. My troops started early this morning. . . .

"In humbly thanking your Majesty for the confidence which you have reposed in me, I venture to add the assurance that no one is more desirous than I am of contributing to the utmost of my abilities to the success of your Majesty's arms. I shall esteem myself fortunate if your Majesty deigns to be satisfied with my zeal and absolute devotion. "MARSHAL BERNADOTTE."²

Marshal Bernadotte's corps occupied the extreme right of the army which now began its march towards Vienna. During its first stage the first Corps was detached to occupy Salzburg, so as to cover the advance and to protect it from any attack upon the right flank or rear. The military historians of the campaign describe this movement as having been executed "with remarkable

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, 9396, and see 9413. ² Alombert et Colin, ii. 199.

prudence."¹ The object of this *detour* to Salzburg having been accomplished, Bernadotte in obedience to orders from Headquarters left Salzburg on 3rd November and resumed the march towards the Danube, which he crossed on the 15th.²

During this stage of the campaign Napoleon lost time at Linz, where he loitered from the 4th until the 11th of November. He was ostensibly engaged in organising a river flotilla; but his real purpose was to receive and manage the Elector of Bavaria, with whom he described himself as being "much occupied." There was, indeed, much to occupy them. Napoleon was soon to make the Elector a King, and to obtain one of his daughters as a bride for Eugène Beauharnais, and another for Marshal Berthier. He was also bent upon transferring Anspach from Prussia to Bavaria for strategic reasons of his own, and upon securing the Elector's co-operation in organising the Confederation of the Rhine.

While the Emperor was maturing these projects, precious time was passing, and he was getting out of touch with his army.³ Napoleon, who never admitted himself to be in the wrong, began to look around for scapegoats, and found one in Marshal Murat, whom he bitterly reproved for having advanced too rapidly on Vienna. He insinuated that Murat was trying to win some personal prestige at the expense of the rest of the Army. Murat, who seems to have been overwhelmed and unnerved by the Emperor's strictures, wrote an indignant reply on 12th November. In truth, the Emperor seems to have been himself to blame at this particular point of time for dropping behind his army, and leaving his subordinates without, or with incomplete, instructions. The military historians of the campaign justify Murat and show that

¹ Alombert et Colin, iv. 44.

² *Ib.*, 279—Alombert, 206.

³ "Son séjour à Linz a été pernicieux." Alombert et Colin, iv. 172.

the Emperor in his complaints disregarded both time and space.¹

Bernadotte, who crossed the Danube at Mautern on 15th November, also came in for reproaches, which appear to have been no less undeserved than in Murat's case. Napoleon declared that he had expected him to cross on the 14th, and he wrote to his brother Joseph that Bernadotte "has made us lose a day, and on a day may depend the destiny of the world." In his impatience he made no allowance for the difficulties of the task, which are explained in the following letter :—

BERNADOTTE TO NAPOLEON

"In spite of the care and anxiety with which I carried out the crossing of the Danube, spending almost the whole night on the river bank, I found it impossible to collect more troops for to-day's march. The crossing occupied all yesterday and last night; the severity of the storm, the paucity of boats, and above all the want of pontoons, rendered the embarkation difficult and slow. I could not obtain more than fourteen boats of various sizes from the country people or from Captain Lostange. The landing stage was so badly constructed that it suffered serious damage. These obstacles and difficulties caused me deep chagrin because they made it impossible for me to carry out your Majesty's wishes as quickly as I desired. I am consoled by the knowledge that your Majesty is well aware of the difficulty of transporting an army across a river, when there is no bridge. I entreat your Majesty to believe that, although others may be able to place at your disposal greater talents than I possess none have a more sincere devotion to your Majesty's person or more zeal for the success of your Majesty's Arms."²

The truth appears to be that Napoleon having lost several days at Linz was throwing the blame upon Murat

¹ Alombert, 140, 166, 178; *Corr. de Nap.*, 9497; Alombert et Colin, iv. 108, where reference is made to Napoleon's "ordres incomplètes et moyens insuffisants."

² Alombert, 210, 220.

and Bernadotte. All the witnesses absolve them from blame. Captain Alombert, who has written a monumental work on this campaign, Captain Lostange, who commanded the flotilla, Danilevski, the Russian historian of the campaign, and Baron Hyde de Neuville, who happened to be on the spot, agree in testifying to the dangers of navigating the river, the inadequacy of the transport materials, and the severity of the weather.¹

Bernadotte, having occupied a fortnight in a march so rapid that according to an American writer he "accomplished what seemed impossible,"² reached the plain of Austerlitz in time to ride with Soult and Bessieres at the side of the Emperor at the inspection of the Imperial Guard on 1st December.³ It was the eve of the day which was to make that spot for ever famous.

¹ Alombert, 214, 215, 304, 309; Hyde de Neuville (Eng. Tr.) i, 204.

² Sloane, ii. 246, 247.

³ *Victoires Conquêtes*, xv. 235.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BATTLE OF AUSTERLITZ

"The Sun of Austerlitz"

DECEMBER 2, 1805

ON 2nd December 1805, close by the small Moravian town of Austerlitz, was fought the battle upon which, above all others, Napoleon always most prided himself. His pride was justifiable; for none of his victories was lit up by more of glamour and of glory, or led directly to more brilliant results. It was the first pitched battle which he had fought as Emperor; and he fought it on the first anniversary of his Coronation. Both the European sovereigns who bore the Imperial title were on the field with their armies, a fact which gave it the name of the Battle of the Three Emperors. It was won by a characteristic display of his incomparable military genius. It was followed by the strengthening of the bases of his throne, by the consolidation of his Kingdom of Italy, and by the laying of the foundation stone of the Confederation of the Rhine, which he was bent on erecting upon the ruins of the Holy Roman Empire as a feudatory buffer between France and Eastern Europe.

Those who desire to remind themselves of all the details of the battle must seek them elsewhere. The purpose of this chapter is to tell so much of the story as will render intelligible the part which Bernadotte played upon that memorable day.

Some 80,000 Russians and Austrians were ranged with their backs to Austerlitz, while Napoleon faced

them along a line which occupied nearly six miles. He had with him only a fraction of the Grand Army, probably not much more than 73,000 men ; for he had detached three army corps to guard his lines of communication. He fought the battle of Austerlitz with five corps, commanded respectively by Marshals Lannes, Murat, Bernadotte, Soult, and Davout. Lannes and Murat were on the right, Bernadotte and Soult in the centre, and Davout on the left. In the morning the field was bathed in a mist which was dispersed by the rays of that Sun of Austerlitz, which has become proverbial for the break of a fortunate day.

On the morning of the battle, Napoleon and his five Marshals were the actors in a dramatic scene which has found an effective word-painter in one of the Imperial Aides-de-Camp, Count Philippe de Ségur, who watched it from his place near the Emperor's side. On the summit of a hillock, to which the soldiers gave the name of the Emperor's Mound, Napoleon awaited the five chiefs of the Army, who galloped up one by one to receive their final orders. He was surrounded by a brilliant group, which included Marshal Berthier, Chief of the Staff, Marshal Bessières, who commanded the Imperial Guard, and General Oudinot, who commanded the Grenadiers. Let us quote the eye-witness's description.¹

" From various points of our line we saw all the chiefs of the army gallop up, each attended by an Aide-de-Camp. Napoleon had given orders that they should all muster round him to receive his last commands. They were the five Marshals, Murat, Lannes, Bernadotte, Soult, and Davout. At that solemn moment these Marshals formed round Napoleon the most formidable assemblage that the imagination of man could conceive. What a marvellous spectacle ! What a cluster of glory was crowded in that brilliant group ! How justly and

¹ De Ségur, ii. 463, 472.

widely celebrated were the redoubtable chieftains, who encircled the greatest warrior of modern times. If my life could last for eternity, the impression of that scene could never fade from my memory. There began one of the most famous days of history. How quickly the times have changed! In those days how grand was everything! What great events! What splendid men! What magnificent careers!"

De Ségur goes on to describe how Napoleon gave his orders to each marshal, and how the Marshals galloped off one by one to the head of their respective corps. He gave each his own message. "When it came to Bernadotte's turn," writes De Ségur, "the Emperor's voice took a noticeably dry and imperious tone, and when, a few minutes afterwards, the Marshal's two divisions were starting for the point of attack he harangued them himself: "Soldiers," he said, "remember that you belong to the First Army Corps of the Grand Army." This incident was probably the fruit of Bernadotte's criticisms of the Emperor for leaving him unsupported at Munich. Such criticisms always reached the Emperor's ears.

The witnesses of this scene little knew the angry passions which animated some of these brilliant Marshals. That very morning Lannes had sent a challenge to Soult, and, receiving no reply, had gone to him and had said, "Where is your sword? I have been waiting for you." Soult had replied, "We have got more important matters to attend to to-day," and Lannes had hurled back a contemptuous retort.¹ Their quarrel was merged in the approaching fray.

The battle of Austerlitz illustrates the sublime simplicity which so often marked Napoleon's strategy and renders his military achievements such a fascinating study even for an ordinary civilian. He seems to have known—whether from intuition, or from observation,

¹ Thiébault, ii. 153.

or from information obtained through a spy—that the enemy would mass their strength on their left, with the object of turning his right wing. He resolved to encourage them in this movement to lure their left wing away from their main position, and, catching them “hoist with their own petard,” to win the victory by cutting their enfeebled centre.

Everything operated and developed in substantial accordance with his calculations. The enemy attacked his right wing in great force. On this point he had placed Davout, who deliberately gave way without allowing himself to be turned. On the other hand Lannes and Murat on the French left more than held their own; and in the centre Soult supported by Bernadotte drove back the enemy's centre towards Austerlitz. The line of battle as the French right wing fell back, from being straight became oblique, and as the enemy's centre gave way, the oblique formation gradually assumed the shape of an arc. Holding the interior lines of this arc of battle Napoleon occupied a position of enormous advantage, so long as his wings remained steady. While the enemy found it impossible to preserve touch between such extended units Napoleon was close to his wings and was able to take advantage of the comparative compactness of his inner lines, by reinforcing his centre and his two wings as occasion required. At a critical moment he strengthened Davout on the right by sending him a strong detachment of imperial guards under Duroc. At another pinch he supported Soult by despatching Oudinot and his grenadiers to his assistance. At a turning point in the battle he launched the Cavalry of the Guard at the enemy's centre under those fine *sabreurs*, Rapp and Bessières.

Bernadotte in the centre of the line was stationed behind, and as a support to Soult. He was in command of two divisions of infantry, but was seriously hampered by lack of cavalry. De Ségur was sent to him with some

orders from the Emperor. He says: "I found him (Bernadotte) at the head of his infantry, agitated and uneasy, expecting from his soldiers a calmness of which he did not set them an example. His anxiety was, it is true, not devoid of justification. Pointing out to me the formidable masses of cavalry which were gathering in front of him, he complained somewhat too loudly that he had not a single squadron with which to oppose them. He pressed me so earnestly to ask the Emperor to send him some cavalry that I could not refuse to convey his message. Napoleon answered with some impatience: 'He must know very well that I have no cavalry to spare.'"

Bernadotte bided his time, and, when it arrived, De Ségur says that it was he who completed the defeat of the enemy. At all events, he made an important contribution to the victory. He is said to have done so by taking the hazardous course of departing from his instructions, which were to move his corps to a point on the battlefield where it would have been withdrawn to such a distance as to weaken Soult's position at the centre. In disregard of these orders he is said to have detached a division towards the northern side of the plateau of Pratzenburg, upon which eminence he rightly divined that the final blow would be struck. Strengthened by this timely support as well as by the fine cavalry work of Rapp and Bessières, Soult was enabled to sweep down the south-western side of the plateau, and cut the enemy's centre in twain. The Austrian correspondent of our Foreign Office reported that Bernadotte's corps which were mainly composed of infantry "took clever advantage" of the disorder which the French cavalry caused in the enemy's ranks.¹ In this movement Bernadotte exposed himself, as was his habit. He was unhurt, but one of his Aides-de-Camp, Colonel Chalopin, was killed, and another, Colonel Gerard, was wounded. The

¹ F. O. (Austria), 7/94; cf. *Victories Conquêtes* et xv. 256, 257.

striking of these blows at the enemy's centre assured a victory, in which the Russian and Austrian losses amounted to 33,000 men and 186 guns.¹ How many perished in the waters of the frozen lake of Telemitz is an unsettled question, which we refrain from discussing.

The strategy of Austerlitz evoked the usual crop of criticisms. For example, Thiébault, who served with distinction under Soult, refused to allow Soult any credit for the success of his corps, which he attributes to his subordinates, Vandamme and St. Hilaire. Davout gave currency to a suggestion that Bernadotte was lacking in energy for not pursuing the enemy; but Bernadotte was weak in cavalry, and received no orders to pursue. Mr. Rose is probably right in concluding that Napoleon, satisfied with the victory, gave little heed to the pursuit. Content with having inflicted upon his enemy the loss of more than two-fifths of their whole army, he claimed credit for magnanimity in having spared the remnant.²

The victory of Austerlitz broke the lion-heart of William Pitt. It also broke up for a time the coalition between the Emperors of Russia and Austria, who were disposed to reproach each other for the defeat. The Czar withdrew his army, and negotiations for peace began on 4th December at an interview between Napoleon and the Emperor Francis. An eye-witness tells us that he saw Marshals Soult and Bernadotte standing at a distance of five paces from the two Emperors.³

Austria was now to enjoy nearly four years time to breathe, while Napoleon proceeded to dispose of Prussia and Russia.

¹ *Victoires Conquêtes*, xv. 243, 247, 256, 257.

² Thiébault, ii. 158.

³ *Chevalier de Maubart*, ii. 29.

CHAPTER XIX

ANSPACH AND PONTE CORVO

DECEMBER 1805—JULY 1806

"Wishing to give to our Cousin Marshal Bernadotte testimony of our gratitude for the services which he has rendered to our Crown, we do hereby confer upon him the Principality of Ponte Corvo, to possess it in full proprietorship and sovereignty and as an immediate fief of our Crown."—*Letters Patent given by Napoleon, 3rd June 1806.*

HAVING crushed Austria at Austerlitz Napoleon proceeded to punish Prussia for her shiftiness during the recent campaign by compelling her to sign a humiliating treaty which included, as one of its terms, the cession of Anspach to Bavaria. The Emperor required Anspach for strategic reasons as a camping ground within easy reach of one of the weakest spots in the Prussian frontier. The prospect of losing what had been an appanage of his House for five centuries was particularly hurtful to the pride of the Prussian King. When his envoy protested against the surrender of Anspach, on the ground that it was "the cradle of the Hohenzollerns," Napoleon laughed him to scorn, and replied that "there is no need of a cradle when one is grown up."

Bernadotte, who had been employed since Austerlitz in patrolling the Danube, was now selected as Governor of Anspach, with orders to substitute everywhere the arms of Bavaria for those of Prussia.¹ Instructions for his guidance were contained in a letter from the Emperor to Berthier, who was left in Germany as the Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Army. "You will recommend Marshal Bernadotte," wrote Napoleon to

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, 9771, 9777, 9786, 9810, 9908, 9937. 121

Berthier, "to observe all the formalities, to speak in terms of high praise of the King of Prussia, and to employ all the ceremonious compliments suitable to such an occasion."¹ Napoleon was never so polite to an enemy as when he wanted time to prepare for his annihilation.

An old Captain of the Royal-la-Marine regiment, under whom Bernadotte had served in former days as a private soldier, happened to be settled in Anspach. The old Captain presented himself at Court and was invited to dinner. He reminded the Governor of an occasion when he had severely reprimanded Private Bernadotte and had called him a "wrong-headed fellow." "I remember the occasion very well," said the Marshal, "but you see that in spite of my wrong-headedness I have not done very badly."

At Anspach, Bernadotte appears to have met with his usual success as an administrator. Although he was merely filling a gap, he maintained a dignified Court, and left behind him an agreeable impression. A prominent German official, Ritter von Lang, writes in his memoirs: "In 1806 came a French occupation of Anspach. . . . Bernadotte was the Commander-in-Chief and frequently gave balls. At one of these I saw four Marshals of the Empire, Bernadotte, Mortier, Lefebvre, and Davout. Bernadotte is a tall dark man with fiery eyes under thick eyebrows. Mortier is still taller, with a long pigtail, and the stupid face of a sentinel on guard. Lefebvre is an old Alsatian camp-boy with a wife who was once a washerwoman. Davout is a little, smooth-pated, unpretentious man, who seemed never to tire of waltzing."

Von Lang tells us that Bernadotte described to him the delight which he took in the business of administration. He told him that he had been very happy in Hanover, where he had devoted himself to the affairs of the Government; and he added that he cherished the

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, 9810.

agreeable dream that Anspach was to be his own principality and that he was destined to make the people happy. It is evident that he already indulged in royal aspirations ; and he was not fanciful in doing so. It was rumoured in Berlin that Napoleon intended to make him Prince of Anspach, or of Passau, or of Innvertheil, or of some other German fief.¹

While Bernadotte was dreaming of principalities Napoleon was actually contemplating his elevation to princely rank. It was in the first six months of 1806 that the Emperor began to distribute crowns and coronets. In rapid succession he proclaimed his brother-in-law Murat Grand Duke of Berg and Cleves, his brother Joseph King of Naples and of Sicily, his sister Eliza Grand Duchess of Lucca, his sister Pauline Duchess of Guastalla, and his Chief of the Staff, Berthier, Prince of Neuchatel and Valengin.

Meanwhile Napoleon wrote to Joseph : " I think that Bernadotte and Masséna should be established at Naples with the title of Prince, and with adequate endowments to assure the fortune of their families." * On second thoughts the Emperor postponed Masséna's elevation until a later date ; but he recurred to the project of elevating Bernadotte in another letter which he addressed to King Joseph on 31st March : " You will see that I have created six fiefs in your Kingdom. I think that you should give the principal one to Marshal Bernadotte with the title of Duke of Tarentum. I have given the principality of Neuchatel to Berthier, because I should commence by recognising one who has served me longest, and who has never failed me. Your family connection with Bernadotte makes it obligatory upon you to grant him special privileges in your Palace, since his children are your nephews, and you should assign to him a revenue of four or five

¹ Hans Kloeber, 169 ; F. O. 64/71 (Prussia)..

² *Roi Joseph*, ii. 97 ; *Corr. de Nap.*, 9944 (letter of 8th March 1806).

hundred thousand livres (*i.e.*, £16,000 or £20,000) a year. The late Queen of Naples did the same for Nelson. You see that I am rewarding, and I shall continue to reward, my commanders and my soldiers (*les chefs et les soldats*)."¹ It is curious to find Napoleon citing Nelson's Duchy of Bronté as a precedent for the proposed nomination of Bernadotte to a Neapolitan fief. He abandoned the idea of creating a Duke of Tarentum at this time. Three years passed before he gave that particular title to Marshal MacDonald.

A fresh turn of events in Italy fixed Napoleon's floating ideas. After King Joseph's accession, a dispute arose between the Crown of Naples and the Vatican over the two small border States of Benevent and Ponte Corvo. The Emperor suddenly formed the resolve of settling this dispute by erecting these two States into principalities for Talleyrand and Bernadotte, and he announced his intention in the following message to the Senate dated 5th June: "Senators, as the duchies of Benevent and Ponte Corvo have been a cause of disputes between the King of Naples and the Court of Rome, we have deemed it expedient to end these difficulties by erecting these duchies into immediate fiefs of our empire. We have taken the opportunity of recompensing the services rendered to us by our Grand Chamberlain and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Talleyrand, and by our Cousin, Marshal Bernadotte."²

To the King of Naples, the Emperor wrote on the same day :—

THE EMPEROR TO KING JOSEPH

"My brother, the conduct of the Court of Rome is very foolish. I wish to make them feel the first taste of what they have to fear from me. The States of Benevent and Ponte Corvo must be burdensome to you. I have converted them into two duchies—Benevent for Talleyrand, and Ponte Corvo for Bernadotte. I know they (*i.e.*, the States) are not rich, but I shall supplement

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, 10041; *Roi Joseph*, ii. 123. ² *Corr. de Nap.*, 10318.

their revenues. Talleyrand is wealthy enough not to require such help. I shall undertake the endowment of Bernadotte's duchy. You understand that when I bestow the title of Duke and Prince upon Bernadotte, it is out of consideration for your wife ; because I have in my army Generals who have served me better, and on whose attachment I can count more safely. But I have felt that it would be suitable for the brother-in-law of the Queen of Naples to have a distinguished rank at your Court. . . . Send two squadrons of cavalry and some infantry to Benevent and to Ponte Corvo, and appoint a Commandant to give possession of them to Talleyrand and to Bernadotte. That will hinder meetings, petitions, etc. As the Journals will announce the news in two days, no time must be lost in occupying these two places."

King Joseph was able to answer on 26th June that he had carried out these orders ; that the Governors of Benevent and Ponte Corvo had returned to Rome ; and that the inhabitants seemed content with the change.¹ On 6th July the Emperor gave formal notice to Bernadotte that he was created Prince of Ponte Corvo, and directed him to send a Minister to administer his Principality in his name. The Letters Patent ran as follows :

" Napoleon by the Grace of God and the Constitutions of the Empire, Emperor of the French and King of Italy, to all present and future, Greeting. Wishing to give to our Cousin, Marshal Bernadotte, a testimony of our gratitude for the services which he has rendered to our Crown, we have resolved to confer upon him, and we do hereby confer upon him, the Principality of Ponte Corvo, with the title of Prince and Duke of Ponte Corvo, to possess it in full proprietorship and sovereignty, and as an immediate fief of our Crown. It is our intention that he should transmit the said principality to his legitimate male children, in order of primogeniture, reserving to ourselves the right, if his said issue should become extinct, to dispose of the said principality as

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, 10314 ; *Roi Joseph*, ii. 274, 276.

we may think most to the advantage of our people and of our Crown. Our Cousin, Marshal Bernadotte, shall in his said quality of Prince of Ponte Corvo take the Oath to serve as a good and loyal subject. The same Oath shall be taken by his successors. Given at our Palace of St. Cloud, 3rd June 1806."

This was the greatest of the favours that Napoleon extended to Bernadotte, who was thus, not for the first time, singled out with Murat and Berthier from among the other marshals. None of the others received titles until 1808, when they were made Dukes. Masséna and Davout became Princes in 1809, Ney in 1812. The rest never attained that rank; and Soult was not the only one who aspired to it in vain. Bernadotte's promotion exposed him to jealousy from his comrades and especially from Davout, who, being connected in the same degree to the Imperial family, was deeply chagrined, and thenceforward used to speak of Bernadotte as "that miserable Ponte Corvo."

Why did the Emperor confer such a signal favour upon Bernadotte, who had been his rival, and the opponent of his climb to power? Napoleon himself said that it was to gratify his brother and sister-in-law. But this, although true so far as it went, is not an adequate explanation. Thibaudeau is probably right in drawing the inference that Napoleon wished to complete his conquest of Republican France by identifying irrevocably with his new era of titles and of imperial splendour the "obstacle man" of the 18th Brumaire, who had been known under the Consulate as "the last of the Romans."

Napoleon was seldom influenced in his promotions by mere personal likes or dislikes. If he had confined his favours to the persons whom he liked, or to the persons who liked him, they would have been bestowed on few. In a letter which Talleyrand, by his direction, wrote to Lucien Bonaparte for the purpose of inducing him to



MARSHAL BERNADOTTE
Prince of Ponte Corvo 1806

rally to the Empire, Napoleon's attitude towards the preferment of public men is defined. The letter, which was written at the period which we are now discussing, contained the following passage: "It has made no difference that some men have conspired, and that others have nearly always given cause for dissatisfaction. In spite of these conspiracies, in spite of these disaffections, it has been enough that they could be of use to France for the Emperor to give them the opportunity of serving her. He has never failed to employ them. He has overwhelmed them with honours and with fortune."¹ When Napoleon spoke of giving men "an opportunity of being useful to France" he regarded himself as being the embodiment of France. He would not have made Bernadotte a Prince, if it had not fitted in with his own policy.

Ponte Corvo was a Liliputian principality with six thousand inhabitants and just enough revenue to pay its way. Yet Napoleon valued it as an Imperial asset at a million, and it had a priceless value for Bernadotte. It gave him a part which he was able to play as if to the manner born. It made him a French Prince, and the equal of reigning sovereigns. His transition, four years afterwards, to the steps of an ancient throne seemed less abrupt than would have been the case if he had remained plain Marshal Bernadotte. That he was completely won to Napoleon by this preferment is proved by the contents of the following letter which he wrote on 22nd June to his old comrade² Lefebvre in reply to congratulations:—

BERNADOTTE TO LEFEBVRE.

"The Emperor, my dear friend, overwhelms me with benevolence and with honours. You know my soul (*mon ame*). You have had opportunities of appreciating

¹ Jung, *Lucien Bonaparte et ses Memoires*, iii. 26.

² Bernadotte, *The First Phase*, 91, 94, 113, 136.

it in those critical moments when nature reveals itself. Therefore you can understand how grateful and happy I am. For a long time my thoughts and wishes have been entirely consecrated to our august sovereign. My devotion and zeal could not be greater; but there remains the pleasure which is afforded to me by seeing always before my eyes the evidence of his benignity and kindness. The interest which you take in my good fortune gives me the keenest pleasure. I thank you very sincerely. Believe me that always and in all circumstances of my life I shall be as much at your service as at that of

JOHN BERNADOTTE."¹

This letter is not well known. It strikes a characteristic note of emotional exaggeration. But there is no reason to doubt that it was the sincere expression of the writer's feelings at the moment. Since the establishment of the Empire in May 1804 Bernadotte had kept the bargain which he then made, that if he could not render affection to Bonaparte, he would at all events render him loyal co-operation. The present writer has searched in vain for evidence of any breach of that understanding down to the period at which we have now arrived. Bernadotte had sometimes gasconaded as he was always prone to do. Napoleon had sometimes found fault with him, but not more severely than with Murat, Ney, and others. We are now approaching an event which in October 1806 disturbed the harmonious relations which had existed since May 1804, and revived their old antipathies.

¹ *Intermédiaire des chercheurs et curieux*. viii. 447.

CHAPTER XX¹

THE CAMPAIGN OF 1806—THE COMBAT OF SCHLEIZ— THE EVE OF JENA—AN UNFORTUNATE ERROR OF JUDGMENT OCTOBER 2-13, 1806

"I shall start in half-an-hour."—*Bernadotte to Berthier at 6 p.m. on the night before Jena.*

"Marshal Davout has just communicated to me your letter to him of to-day. . . . In view of its contents . . . I am halting my troops where they are, and I await further commands."—*Bernadotte to Berthier at 8 p.m. on the night before Jena.*

BERNADOTTE'S Governorship of Anspach came to an end when war between France and Prussia was precipitated by the revelation that Napoleon, after gaining the King of Prussia's neutrality by the lure of Hanover, was bargaining with England for its restoration to King George III.² The Prussians, indignant at this double dealing, lost no time in mobilising: but Napoleon was not taken unawares. He had already collected 160,000 men within striking distance of the Prussian frontier. On the 25th September he left St. Cloud, and was in touch with his army in Northern Bavaria on 2nd October.

¹ For the Campaign of 1806 special use has been made of *La Campagne de Prusse* (1806), par P. Foucart; *La Manœuvre d'Jena*, par General Bonnal; *La Campagne d'Jena*, par Henri Houssaye; *The Campaign of Jena*, by Colonel Maude, C.B.; *Napoleon's Conquest of Prussia*, by F. Lorraine Petre; and the monograph, *Le Maréchal Bernadotte et les manœuvres d'Jena*, par Lt.-Colonel Titeux (from documents in the War archives and from papers of General Dupont), published in the *Revue Napoléonienne*, Tome III, October 1902-March 1903, pp. 69-152.

² F. O. 27/73; Bonnal, 21-28.

The Grand Army was ordered to advance in three parallel columns led respectively by Marshals Bernadotte, Soult, and Lannes. Bernadotte was followed by Davout, Soult by Ney, and Lannes by Augereau. Bernadotte led the centre with the First Corps, which with the cavalry under Murat formed the vanguard of the Army half-a-day's march ahead of the rest. Davout was to follow Bernadotte in the centre. To Soult the Emperor wrote on 5th October: "Marshal Bernadotte is at the head of my centre. He has behind him Marshal Davout's corps."¹ On 7th October he ordered Davout "to follow and support Bernadotte."² This arrangement afterwards helped to create a question of "*etiquette de commandement*."

Napoleon frequently showed a disposition to place his foreign legions under Bernadotte's command, perhaps because he apprehended danger to himself from that Marshal's power of gaining partisans among French troops. In this campaign Bernadotte successfully protested against this practice in the following letter:

BERNADOTTE TO BERTHIER

"I remember the serious chagrin and anxiety which the Bavarians caused me during the campaign of 1805. At that time I refrained from giving expression to the annoyance which they occasioned me by their irregularities on the march, their unpunctuality in executing orders, in fine the bitter and well-founded dissatisfaction which they caused me in a thousand ways. . . . Whatever post the Emperor assigns to me and whatever command he gives me, I shall feel honoured and shall bring to his service all the zeal and energy of which I am capable. But as a favour I beg not to be asked to command foreigners."³

On the morning of 9th October the vanguard came up with a Prussian force under General Tauenzien at

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, 10941.

² Bonnal, 307.

³ Bonnal, 81 (Letter to Berthier); Napoleon complied with this request, see *Corr. de Nap.*, 10942.

the town of Schleiz. The Emperor having seen Murat advance to the attack with two cavalry regiments, and having directed Bernadotte to support him with an infantry division, returned to his Headquarters. Murat cleared the woods flanking the road, and drove the enemy into and out of Schleiz to the heights on the other side of the town. Here the Prussians took up a strong position, against which Bernadotte brought into action five picked companies of Light Infantry, who dislodged the enemy from the heights. The cavalry then re-formed, and routed the Prussians, who took cover in the neighbouring forests, into which they could not be followed.¹

Schleiz was the opening combat of the campaign and afforded a good example of effective co-operation between infantry and cavalry. At St. Helena Napoleon disparaged its importance, but in the official bulletin he declared that the combat of Schleiz had been "very disastrous for the Prussian Army."²

We are now approaching the most debatable episode in Bernadotte's career, namely, his absence from the field of battle on the day of Jena. It would be impossible to appreciate the merits of the controversy, which this episode aroused, without a study of the *terrain*, of the despatches which passed to and fro, and of the frequent changes in the Emperor's plans.

After the combat of Schleiz, the Grand Army continued its march northward, advancing on a line parallel with the River Saale, and on the east of that river. On the western side of the river the Prussian Army was collected in the neighbourhood of Erfurt, Weimar and Jena. The river, which thus divided the opposing armies from each other, was crossed by four bridges, situated respectively at Jena, Dornburg, Camburg, and at Kosen near Naumberg.

¹ Foucart, i. 434-441; Houssaye, 32, 33.

² *Corr. de Nap.*, 10994; Montholon, *Mélanges*, i, 215.

Napoleon was uncertain whether the Prussians would wait for him on the west of the River Saale, or would retire northward before he could catch and attack them. It was obvious that if (as actually happened) the enemy should wait for him on the west of the Saale, he would have to turn westward so as to carry his army across that river; and that, in that event, the four crossing-places at Jena, Dornburg, Camburg, and Kosen would be points of strategic importance, whether as avenues of attack, or as ways of escape or retirement.

In view of the uncertainty of the enemy's plans, the Emperor took steps to prepare for every eventuality. Accordingly, Davout, who had hitherto been following Murat and Bernadotte, was ordered to branch off to Naumberg, so as to guard the neighbouring bridge and pass of Kosen, while Murat and Bernadotte continued their route northward to Zeitz, on the road to Leipzig. If the enemy should succeed in making their escape, Murat and Bernadotte were to advance upon Leipzig and to attack the Prussian army of reserve, which was in that vicinity. If, on the other hand, the Prussians should delay their retreat, and linger on the west side of the Saale, Murat and Bernadotte were to turn westward, to Naumberg, and with Davout to form the Right of the Grand Army. Davout was, in that event, to defend the bridge and defile of Kosen and to debouch from that point, while Bernadotte was to defend the crossing-places and defiles of Camburg and Dornburg, and to debouch from those two points. The rest of the army were to cross at Jena. In the meantime Murat was to command the vanguard.¹

During the night of the 12th Murat received information which satisfied him that the event had occurred in which he had been ordered to go with Bernadotte to Naumberg. Accordingly the two Marshals started early on the morning of the 13th, arriving at Naumberg in the afternoon.²

¹ Foucart, i. 518 (Orders of 12th October).

² *Ib.*, 595, 596, 604; Bonnal, 412.

Meanwhile the Emperor at his Headquarters at Gera had been spending a night of feverish uncertainty and excitement. Having received information that the enemy was on the west of the Saale, and that he would be able to engage them in battle before they could effect their retreat, he resolved to engage them on the 16th, and at 7 a.m., on the 13th., ordered a day of rest for the troops. In the course of the next two hours further information reached him which convinced him that the 16th would be too late. He forthwith issued orders at 9 a.m. countermanding the day of rest, and summoning the Marshals to take their places along the line of the Saale. It now became his intention to fight the battle on the day after the morrow, that is to say, 15th October, the anniversary of the surrender of Ulm. In the Bulletin, written on the morning of the 13th, he wrote: "Events succeed each other rapidly. The anniversary of Ulm shall be famous in the history of France."

In his order to Murat he betrayed his excitation of feeling :—

NAPOLÉON TO MURAT

"At last the veil is torn aside ! The enemy is beginning to retreat on Magdeburg. Go as quickly as possible with Bernadotte's corps to Dornburg, a large village situate between Jena and Naumburg. Go there yourself with your dragoons and cavalry. . . . I think the enemy will either try to attack Marshal Lannes at Jena or will slip away. If they attack Marshal Lannes your position at Dornburg will enable you to help him. . . . If nothing new happens, come to me yourself to-night to Jena.¹

NAPOLÉON."

This letter reached Naumberg on the afternoon of the 13th. Murat, preferring to join the Emperor forthwith, started at once for Headquarters, leaving Bernadotte

¹ Foucart, i. 579, 580.

to give a short rest to his tired troops¹ and to prepare for a night march to Dornburg. At 6 p.m. Bernadotte wrote to the Chief of Staff:—

BERNADOTTE TO BERTHIER

"NAUMBERG, 13th October, 6 p.m.

"Although my troops are very tired and have not had their meal, I shall start in half-an-hour and I shall reach Camburg before midnight. I shall then give my troops a short rest, and shall be at Dornburg before daylight to-morrow, ready to proceed to Weimar or anywhere else. My cavalry will be at Dornburg to-night. . . ."

If Bernadotte had adhered to this intention, all the trouble which ensued would have been avoided. In forming a judgment on his conduct during the next twenty-four hours, it is fair to remember that from this time onwards there was a complete dislocation of any communication between the Headquarters Staff and Bernadotte's corps. Some of Bernadotte's defenders have been prone to attribute malice to Marshal Berthier, the Chief of the Staff. It seems more reasonable to suppose that the Staff were uncertain whether Bernadotte was at Naumberg or Dornburg. M. Henri Houssaye, no friend of Bernadotte's, says that the Staff was guilty of "inexplicable negligence," and adds that, if Berthier was in doubt whether the Marshal was at Naumberg or Dornburg, he should have sent duplicate orders to both places.² The Marshals' absolute dependence upon their written orders was, as has been pointed out by Colonel Maude, incidental to Napoleon's "one-man system."³ Bernadotte was particularly sensitive upon this subject, especially when Napoleon and Berthier were concerned.⁴

¹ Bernadotte's corps had marched 16 miles on the 9th October, 12 miles on the 10th, 16 miles on the 11th, 18 miles on the 12th, and 10 miles on the 13th. Maude, p. 146; Foucart, 604, 605.

² Henri Houssaye, 124, 125.

³ Maude's *Campaign of Jena*, 117; cf. Bonnal, 60, 68, 343.

⁴ *The First Phase*, 206, 207, 213.

Meanwhile, the Emperor, having received information that Marshal Lannes, who had occupied Jena, might be attacked before nightfall, issued a fresh set of orders at three p.m. to the commanders of outlying corps to be in readiness to support Lannes, adding that "if no attack takes place this evening at Jena, you will receive to-night the Emperor's orders for to-morrow."¹

The only commander to whom this order was not sent was Bernadotte, who was puzzled when he heard of the expected movements from Davout. Davout's orders did not contain any message for Bernadotte, but their contents were communicated to him, and made him aware that there was a change of plan, that orders had been issued which had not yet reached him, and that further orders were to be expected next morning. What was he to do? Was he to carry out his previous orders and proceed on his night march to Dornburg? Or was he to "wait and see"? Unhappily for him he decided to "wait and see."

The following was his letter to the Chief of the Staff:—

BERNADOTTE TO BERTHIER

"NAUMBURG, 13th October, 8 p.m.

"Marshal Davout has just communicated to me, Duke, your letter to him of to-day, of which your Aide-de-Camp, M. Perigord, was the bearer. In view of its contents I thought it my duty to stop the contemplated movement of which I informed you in my letter of 6 p.m. this evening, because you order Marshal Davout to manœuvre on the enemy's left wing in the event of Marshal Lannes being attacked to-night in the neighbourhood of Jena, and you add that if the attack does not take place, he will receive further orders from the Emperor to-morrow. As I presume that those will be general orders, I am halting my troops where they are, and I await further commands. I am still with my whole corps in the neighbourhood of Naumburg. I am ready to execute whatever orders the Emperor shall send me."²

¹ Foucart, i. 586.

² Foucart, i. 605, 606.

Viewed in the light of subsequent events, this was a very unfortunate change of resolution on his part. It exposed him to criticisms of which the following comment by General Bonnal, one of the military historians of this campaign, is an example:—

"All went well so long as Murat had direction of the First Corps and the Cavalry. But when he (Murat) went on to Jena, Bernadotte committed an act of culpable indiscipline. This Marshal, one of the ablest and perhaps the most subtle (*le plus fin*) of all the generals of his time, ought to have understood that it would make no difference in the general situation whether Lannes was attacked on the evening of the 13th or not. In either event it was necessary for the First Corps to be, not only at Dornburg, but across the Saale opposite that place, on the morning of the 14th. He excused himself on the ground that Berthier's despatch warned Davout to expect further orders if Lannes was not attacked on that evening."¹

It has not escaped the notice of other writers that there are two weak points in this criticism of General Bonnal's. In the first place, as Bernadotte alone of all the commanders was left without any orders to meet a new emergency, the words, "culpable indiscipline," seem to be harsh and inapt. In the second place, General Bonnal does not make allowance for the circumstance that, as the battle at this time was fixed for the 15th, not the 14th, Bernadotte had no reason to suppose that it was necessary to have his corps in line at Dornburg on the following morning. On the contrary, he had good reason to conclude that he would have the whole of the 14th to get his corps into line.

On the other hand, the Marshal has found a vigorous defender in Lt.-Col. Titteux, a French Staff Officer, who has written a monograph on this incident. He considers that Bernadotte was justified in postponing

¹ Bonnal, 420, 421.

his march. He writes that the Marshal "naturally concluded that the order to go to Dornburg with Murat was cancelled and that (like Davout) he was to await orders at Naumberg."¹

It occurs to the present writer that Bernadotte, having received orders to go to Dornburg, and not having received any countermand, would have been better advised to proceed to Dornburg. But, in view of the change of situation of which he had become aware, his not doing so cannot be magnified into anything more serious than an error of judgment. When he changed his mind, he supposed, as Napoleon himself did, that the battle would not be fought until the day after the morrow. But the expected does not always happen in war; and it did not happen in this case. The result was that by not carrying out the night march to Dornburg he disabled himself from taking part in the battle which was fought next day. This was the real *causa causans* of all that followed.

¹ Lt.-Col. Titteux, pp. 72-86.

CHAPTER XXI

JENA AND AUERSTADT

OCTOBER 14, 1806

' If Marshal Bernadotte should be with you, you might march together (to Appolda). But the Emperor hopes that he will be in the position which he indicated to him at Dornburg."—*Extract from Berthier's equivocal Despatch which reached Davout at 3 a.m. on 14th October.*

ON the night of the 13th October Marshal Bernadotte bivouacked on the road which led along the eastern bank of the River Saale to the bridges of Camburg and Dornburg. Marshal Davout bivouacked on the road which led straight across the river by the bridge of Kosen to the plain of Auerstadt, and thence to Appolda. The battle was fixed for the 15th, and Bernadotte was at his ease, because he had reason to suppose that he would have the whole of the 14th in which to occupy the bridges of Camburg and Dornburg, and to get his corps into line on the western side of the river.

It was not until 10 p.m. on the night of the 13th that Napoleon suddenly made up his mind to fight next morning; and Berthier sent orders to that effect to all the Marshals except to Bernadotte. No order was sent to him; but a despatch, which reached Marshal Davout at about 3 a.m. on the morning of the 14th, contained the following message "to be communicated to Marshal Bernadotte if he should be at Naumburg":—

BERTHIER TO DAVOUT

"At the Bivouac on the heights of Jena.

"13th October, 10 p.m.

"... Marshal Bernadotte has received orders to go to Dornburg. It is very important that he should have

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gone there. But if he should be at Naumburg that would make it the more necessary for you to execute forthwith the following orders, namely, to go to Appolda and to fall on the enemy's rear, if they should be engaged with us, as we expect they will. . . . You can take whatever route you find most convenient, but the important thing is that you should take part in the battle. If Marshal Bernadotte should be with you, you might march together. But the Emperor hopes that he will be in the position which he has indicated to him at Dornburg. (*Si le Maréchal Bernadotte se trouvait avec vous, vous pourriez marcher ensemble. Mais l'Empereur espère qu'il sera dans la position qu'il lui a indiqué à Dornburg.*)"¹

This message was in the highest degree equivocal. Bernadotte was not *ordered* to march with Davout, nor was Davout ordered to take any particular route to Appolda. Bernadotte was told that, if he happened to be with Davout, he "*might*" march with him. At the same time he was told that it was important that he should have gone to Dornburg, and that the Emperor expected him and wished him to be there. He was near, but not "*with,*" Davout. The two corps were bivouacked on different roads—Bernadotte's corps being posted on the road to Dornburg, and Davout's on the road to Kosen. It was obvious that if he were to march with Davout, and if the Prussians were to escape or debouch by the bridges of Camburg and Dornburg, he would incur tremendous blame. The message was so framed that, whatever might be the event, the Staff would be able to justify themselves under its terms.

Equivocal orders of this kind were by no means uncommon in the Grand Army. Colonel Maude refers to them in the following pointed terms: "It would seem that it was now (October 1806) that there first crept into the Staff the habit of deliberately framing orders capable of being interpreted in several ways.

¹ From copy in Swedish archives, Hans Kloeber, 174, 175.

In order to cover their own responsibility orders were framed admitting of two or more interpretations. If the recipient chose the right one, the Staff congratulated itself on its perspicacity. If, on the other hand, events proved the recipient wrong in his action, they pointed to the order, and said, 'Why, of course that was not what the order meant, any fool would have seen that.'"¹ This message was a good example of such equivocal Staff orders. A French Staff Officer, on the one hand, is of opinion that it conveyed no orders to Bernadotte to march with Davout; while, on the other hand an English historian of the campaign states that the order to that effect, was "clear enough."² It is no wonder that Bernadotte was puzzled what to do.

The Journal of Davout's Army Corps records that Marshal Davout "went to the quarters of His Highness the Prince of Ponte Corvo, the Commander of the First Corps, who had arrived at Naumburg that evening. Marshal Davout communicated to him in writing the orders which he had just received, asking to be informed what course he intended to take. The prince replied that he was starting for Camburg."

Davout asserted afterwards that Bernadotte's decision not to march with him was motivated by a question of *etiquette de commandement*. The story ran that Bernadotte claimed the right, if he and Davout should march together, to lead the column, as he had done from the opening of the campaign down to the 12th October, and that he put forward his priority as commander of the First Army Corps, and his seven years seniority over Davout as a General of Division. It was said that Davout on the other hand pointed to the position of the two corps, and insisted that, if they should march together, his corps, being posted nearest the defile of Kosen, must go first, and that Bernadotte must follow. There is very little direct evidence about this alleged

¹ Maude, 122.

² Lt. Col. Titteux, 115-127; Petre, 172.



MARSHAL DAVOUT
Duke of Auerstadt (1808)
Prince of Eckmühl (1809)



MARSHAL BERTHIER
Prince of Neuchâtel (1806)
Prince of Wagram (1809)

conversation. A careful student of the whole of this episode has declared that "the story of Bernadotte's jealousy and refusal to comply on this occasion is imaginary and without foundation";¹ and it does not appear to be hinted at in the letters or memoirs of Davout. But Davout undoubtedly told the Emperor that something of the kind occurred, and, although he may have garbled, or exaggerated the significance of the conversation, he can hardly have invented the whole incident. The present writer draws the inference that some such conversation did occur on the evening of the 13th or in the early morning of the 14th when Berthier's message was communicated to Bernadotte. The suggestion made in some places² that it took place on the march next day is fantastic. The two corps were posted on different roads, and the two Marshals did not march together, as appears from the Journals of their respective corps.

This alleged conversation was afterwards made the occasion of venomous charges against Bernadotte, because it turned out that, if he had marched with Davout, he would have been at the battle of Auerstadt next day. But, assuming that the conversation took place, neither of the two Marshals had any idea that Davout, next day on his way to Appolda, would meet any army, still less the main Prussian Army; and the ambiguous message sent to him through Davout was construed by him as giving him a discretion as to his route, and at the same time conveying to him that the Emperor wished him to be at Dornburg, on the road to which his troops were already posted. We shall see that the Emperor's bulletin after the battle makes it clear that this is what the Emperor intended and what he supposed was done. Irrespective of any question of *etiquette* Bernadotte conceived that he was doing the best thing under the circumstances. An English military historian of the

¹ Lt.-Col. Titteux, 115 *et seq.*

² e.g. by Savary, ii, 285, 286; (Eng. Tr.) i, 185, 186.

campaign has observed that "one thing is quite certain, that in going to Dornburg, instead of marching with Davout, he (Bernadotte) showed a better grasp of the Imperial idea than his many critics."¹

In view of the Emperor's message emphasising the importance of Bernadotte going to Dornburg, what would have been said if he had marched with Davout, leaving the defiles of Camburg and Dornburg unoccupied, and if the Prussians had escaped in that direction, or if they had debouched through these defiles and had attacked the French in the rear?

At daybreak the two army corps started by their different routes. In the first instance let us follow Marshal Davout. It was the most glorious day of his life. After crossing the bridge and after passing the defile, which led to the plain of Auerstadt, Marshal Davout unexpectedly found himself face to face with the main Prussian Army, which, under the King of Prussia, the Duke of Brunswick, and General Blucher, was trying to effect its retreat northward by way of Naumburg. Marshal Davout with not more than 27,000 men had to meet the attack of a Prussian Army which was not far short of double that number. Then followed one of the most brilliant feats in the whole range of military history.

When Davout started on his march that morning, he was one of the least of Napoleon's Marshals. At the end of the day he was one of the first, if not the first, of them all. This sudden change in his position is well described by Count Philip de Ségur, then an orderly officer to the Emperor: "Davout, an upright, steady, dutiful man, although he had done good service, and in spite of his rank as Marshal, had remained in our eyes an inconspicuous personage. It seemed to us that the Emperor in elevating him had rewarded his personal services, and had given more weight to his devotion to

¹ Maude, 175; cf. Klœber, 173-188, and Rose's *Napoleon*, ii, 93.

his master than to his military merit. That was the general opinion. But, in that single day of Auerstadt, Davout proved that his genius and tenacity only wanted an opportunity to display themselves. He justified the Emperor's choice. In the course of a few hours he emerged from an unmerited obscurity, and became justly celebrated."

In truth, Napoleon himself could not have handled troops with more skill and coolness than Davout did on this occasion. Whenever the Prussians with their superior numbers succeeded in finding some weak point in the French lines, Davout hurried up reinforcements from another part of the field and made the weak spot strong. At last the Duke of Brunswick, putting himself at the head of his troops, led the attack, and fell mortally wounded. The King of Prussia succeeded to the command, and acted with a hesitation of which Davout took advantage by assuming the offensive, driving the Prussian Army back on its reserves, and finally forcing it to evacuate Auerstadt by setting the village on fire.

Meanwhile, a few miles away at Jena, Napoleon, who had no idea that Davout was engaged with the real enemy at Auerstadt, was fighting what he believed to be the main Prussian Army. In fact it was only the rear-guard commanded by Prince Hohenlohe, who was completely outnumbered and outmanœuvred. His troops in their flight from Jena overtook the army of the Prussian King in its disorderly retreat from Auerstadt.

But what was Bernadotte doing all this time? He started from Naumburg at day-break *en route* for Dornburg. When he reached the neighbourhood of Camburg, where there was a crossing-place over the Saale and a defile up on the other side, he posted troops to guard this defile, while he went on to Dornburg. This was a wise and proper precaution; but it was

afterwards said that he might have sent a division to Davout's help. Whether Davout sent an officer to Bernadotte asking for help is a moot point. It has been pointed out that no satisfactory document exists to show that he did so.¹ Davout does not mention it in the Journal of his Corps; and the report of his Aide-de-Camp, Trobriand, which is the only authority on the subject, was not published until seventy-three years after the event, and contains internal evidence of its untrustworthiness.² But a statement to that effect has been made in various forms, of which the following comes from a more reliable source than the others: "The want of some support becoming urgent at Auerstadt, Marshal Davout sent an Aide-de-Camp to the Prince of Ponte Corvo (at Camburg) to inform him of the state of affairs, and to request him to detach to his help the division (*i.e.*, Dupont's) which was at hand. Marshal Bernadotte confining himself to the strict execution of the instructions which he had received replied that he did not consider that he could deprive himself of the troops which he was asked to send."³ Bernadotte's failure to send him help from Camburg appears to have been Davout's main ground for complaint against him; but we shall find that it was not the one which Napoleon adopted, when he afterwards formulated his accusation. -

When Bernadotte reached the approaches to Dornburg, at about eleven o'clock, he was met by unexpected difficulties. The village lay on the riverside at the bottom of a valley, with steep defiles leading to and from it. General Dupont, who commanded one of Bernadotte's divisions, thus described it: "The road which leads to it is very narrow. It is made in the rock of a steep mountain sloping towards the river.

¹ Lt.-Colonel Titteux, 115 *et seq.*

² *Ib.*, 127.

³ *Victoires Conquêtes*, etc., xvi. 331.

The ascent on the other side is still more difficult, being very much longer and steeper. Badly cut rocks in some places obstruct the road. The teams of the transport wagons and of the artillery carriages had to be doubled and even trebled. Some wagons broke down, which increased the disorder. In a word, if it had not been accomplished, it would be difficult to believe that artillery could ever have crossed such a pass."¹

As soon as one division had got through the pass, and the cavalry had crossed the heights, Bernadotte, who heard the sound of cannon on his right, proceeded to Appolda, leaving one of his three divisions still entangled in the defile, and the remaining one outside and behind it. These divisions did not rejoin the Army Corps until late that night or early the next morning. Under these circumstances, although Bernadotte was not in a position to pursue the enemy effectively, his unexpected appearance with fresh troops put a finishing touch to the rout. Two hundred prisoners fell into his hands during that evening, and a thousand more during the night, but his troops had not fired a shot, and could claim no real share in the burden, the heat or glory of the day.

Davout, who had won his battle, sent an Aide-de-Camp, Lieutenant Trobriand, to ask Bernadotte to follow up his victory by sending fresh troops in pursuit. Bernadotte, after inquiring from Trobriand the names of the officers who had fallen in the day's fighting, said: "Return to your Marshal and tell him that I am here and that he need have no fear. You can go." This gasconading observation not unnaturally roused the wrath of the Aide-de-Camp, who replied: "*Sacre bleu*, my Marshal has been fighting from eight o'clock to four, like a lion against overwhelming numbers. He has done enough to show that he had no fear."¹ Bernadotte

¹ Lt.-Col. Titteux, 86, 101.

dismissed the young man sharply and reported him to Headquarters for impertinence. Trobriand did not know that one of Bernadotte's divisions was still struggling through the Dornburg defile, and another was out of reach behind and beyond. His opinion that Bernadotte should have started in pursuit is of no value. Neither Napoleon nor Berthier nor any other competent critic has ever said that he should have pursued the enemy, with one division, and such cavalry as was at his disposal.

After his arrival at Appolda, Bernadotte at 4 p.m. wrote the following letter to the Emperor :—

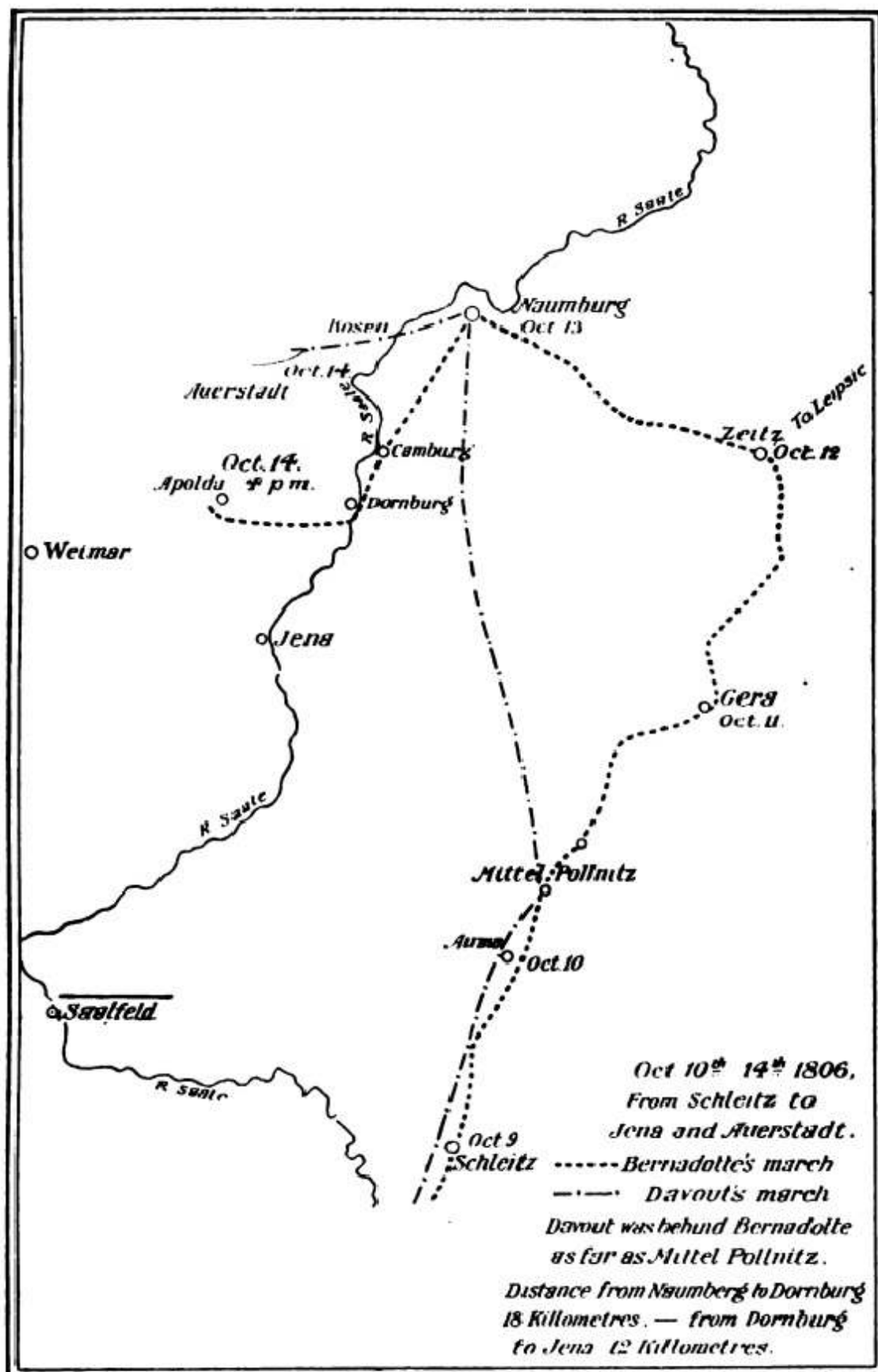
BERNADOTTE TO THE EMPEROR

"I have the honour to inform your Majesty that I have arrived at Appolda. Hearing a cannonade on my right, and presuming that Marshal Davout was engaged with the enemy, I hurried forward with only one division, my Light Cavalry, and three regiments of Dragoons. The bad roads and almost impassable defiles, which we met on the Dornburg route, greatly impeded my march. The break down of several ammunition wagons also caused much loss of time. I shall wait for the troops which I left behind. As soon as they arrive, I shall continue my march to Weimar, unless I receive orders to the contrary. Marshal Davout is still a long way from Appolda. I shall communicate with him. Some of the enemy's troops are to be seen on the heights of Appolda." ¹

On the same evening Bernadotte wrote in similar terms to the Chief of the Staff. He also sent an officer to the Emperor complaining of the failure of the Staff to send him direct orders. On the following morning he was the recipient of despatches instructing him to pursue the Prussians energetically with *carte blanche* to do them as much harm as possible.

¹ *Davout*, par Vigier, i. 214; *Davout*, par A. L. d'Eckmuhl, II 432-434.

² Foucart, 694, 695



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CHAPTER XXII

THE PURSUIT AFTER JENA—THE STORMING OF HALLE —A STORM BREWING AT HEADQUARTERS

OCTOBER 15-21, 1806

"I do not know that I should have attempted to storm the place with 50,000 men. Bernadotte hesitates at nothing. One of these days the Gascon will be caught."—*Napoleon's comment on the storming of Halle.*

"Your miserable Ponte Corvo."—*Davout denouncing Bernadotte to Napoleon.*

THE day of Jena and Auerstadt had been a trying one for the French Army. The troops were worn out; and many of the officers might truthfully have said what Murat wrote in the evening to the Emperor: "*Je tombe de lassitude.*" Yet the whole army was eager to follow up the victory, and none were more so than Bernadotte and his corps, who were burning to retrieve their tarnished reputation.

The Prussians were utterly demoralised. The king avoiding his capital, escaped to East Prussia; and his army, broken into detached fragments, betook themselves to a scattered flight. While Napoleon proceeded straight to Berlin, he sent Marshals Murat, Bernadotte, and Soult in hot pursuit of the enemy along three separate lines, which radiated northwards from the scene of the recent battles.

Now began one of the most remarkable episodes in the whole course of the Napoleonic Wars—the pursuit of the Prussian armies by the three Marshals, Murat, Bernadotte, and Soult. During the next three weeks these Marshals, taking different lines, which started from the

field of Jena and led to Lübeck, advanced close on the heels of the Prussians. We shall follow the course which they took, until they ran the enemy to ground in Lübeck, on the shores of the Baltic. Napoleon said of this three weeks hunt: "*c'est une espèce de chasse*,"¹ and the historians of the campaign have alluded to it as "*la grande poursuite*," or "*la poursuite des trois Maréchaux*."

The First Army Corps, being the freshest, was able to be the first to get away. Starting on the 15th, Bernadotte found himself on the 17th before Halle, a walled fortress occupying a strong position on the northern bank of the River Saale, with a line of hills behind it on the north. The town was protected from the south by the river, and beyond the river by a marshy plain which could only be crossed by a narrow causeway about 650 yards long, and was defended by upwards of 20,000 fresh troops under the Prince of Wurtemberg. To attack it with inferior numbers, and without adequate artillery, appears to have been a mad act. But Bernadotte was in a desperate mood,² and he had among his Generals one who was ready to lead the van. This was Dupont, who, advancing with a regiment and a battalion, carried the causeway, the river-bridge, and the city gate. Bernadotte reinforced him, and a terrible *mêlée* ensued in the streets. The Prince of Wurtemberg retired to the heights at the back of the town, which he had good reason to think was an impregnable position. But he had to deal with a fresh army corps, led by a Marshal and by Generals who were burning to recover their lost laurels. The Prussians, after a vain effort to stem the rush of the French infantry, had to beat a retreat before darkness set in, leaving behind them more than 1,000 killed and wounded, 6,000 prisoners, and thirty guns.³

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, 11120.

² Houssaye, 169; Rapp, 90.

³ Houssaye, 170, 171.

Three days after the storming of Halle, Napoleon on his way to Berlin arrived at the place, and examined with interest the approach to the town and the scenes of the recent fighting. He did not conceal his surprise that Bernadotte should have attacked with so small a force a position so formidable and so well-garrisoned. "I do not know," he said, "that I should have attempted to storm the place with less than 50,000 men. Bernadotte hesitates at nothing. One of these days the Gascon will be caught. (*Bernadotte ne doute de rien. Quelque jour le Gascon y sera pris.*)" ¹

Bernadotte, when the latter phrase was reported to him, complained that the Emperor and the Staff were unjustly depreciating a gallant action by representing it as a piece of foolhardy temerity. From Headquarters his friend, Marshal Lefebvre, wrote to him: "They are disappointed. They would be better pleased if you had not succeeded." ² There were others at Headquarters who rendered him justice. For example General Rapp writes in his Memoirs: "The Duke of Wurtemberg took up his position at Halle. Bernadotte attacked him. His corps had not fought at Auerstadt. He sought an opportunity of winning compensation for the glory which he had missed. He attacked the Prussians at the point of the bayonet, and overthrew everything that lay in his path. The carnage was frightful." ³

After a day's rest Bernadotte resumed the pursuit on the 19th, marching from Halle to the banks of the River Elbe. Having constructed a bridge for the passage of his army, he crossed the river on the 22nd. In the meantime, while he had been occupied in pursuing the enemy, he had been the object of pursuit at Headquarters. Lieutenant Trobriand, Marshal Davout's Aide-de-Camp, tells us that on the morning of the 15th he was sent by his chief to the Emperor with a

¹ Pingaud, 75, 76; Houssaye, 171.

² Sarrans, i. 73.

³ Rapp, 90.

report of the battle of Auerstadt. In a few minutes, Marshal Davout himself appeared on the scene and dismissed Trobriand from the room. Trobriand naively admits that he applied his ear to the key-hole, and heard Davout say : " If your miserable Ponte Corvo had only ordered a column to debouch, I would have had a thousand more brave men at the service of France." The Aide-de-Camp says that his eye then took the place of his ear at the key-hole, and that, when he saw Napoleon hang his head in silence, he chuckled with delight at the turn which the conversation was taking.¹

It is evident that Davout was dinning the Emperor's ears with denunciations of Bernadotte for not having sent him a column from Camburg. It must have been after this interview that Rapp heard the Emperor say : " Bernadotte behaved badly. He would have been delighted if Davout had failed in that affair, which has been all the more glorious for him, because Bernadotte rendered his position difficult. That Gascon will never do anything for others ! " ² The Emperor also spoke of bringing him to a courtmartial, and stated afterwards that he was only restrained by regard for the Marshal's wife, and that if he had done so, Bernadotte would have been shot. We shall find that, on second thoughts, the Emperor turned the incident to much better account.

¹ *Davout*, par de Bloqueville, ii. 433.

² *Rapp*, 87, 88.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE STORM BURSTS—THE EMPEROR'S ACCUSATION

OCTOBER 21-23, 1806

"I let you know in the night that, if you had not carried out that movement and if you were still at Naumburg, you were to march after Marshal Davout and support him. . . . Nevertheless you chose to make a useless march back to Dornburg . . . and Marshal Davout sustained the main attack of the enemy."—*Napoleon, 21st Oct. 1806.*

"Bernadotte had orders to support Marshal Davout so as to defend . . . the field of battle of Auerstadt."—*Napoleon at St. Helena.*

WHEN Napoleon came to formulate his accusation against Bernadotte for his absence from the battles of the 14th October his complaints were (1) that he had sacrificed military operations to a vain question of *etiquette de commandement*, (2) that he had neglected to obey a precise order to be at Dornburg on the morning of the 14th October, and (3) that he had disobeyed an order received in the night of 13th-14th October to march with Marshal Davout on the 14th and support him. As regards the first and second of these complaints enough has been said already in the preceding chapter. As regards the first, it is probable that a question of *etiquette de commandement* was discussed, but that it was not the motive of Bernadotte's action. As regards the second complaint, the worst that can be said is that the Marshal, being left without orders, fell into an error of judgment. These, however, were comparatively minor counts in the indictment. The third accusation was the one to which Napoleon really attached importance, because it covered up the one weak point in his great manœuvre at Jena.

When the smoke of the battles of Jena and Auerstadt

had cleared away, Napoleon began to realise that Davout's victory at Auerstadt was a greater one than his own at Jena, and that the question was being asked everywhere: "Why did the Emperor allow Marshal Davout with such an inferior force to be engaged with the main Prussian Army at Auerstadt?" If he had told the truth he would have admitted that he was ignorant of the position of the main Prussian Army, and that he had no idea that Davout would meet it. He preferred to declare that he had foreseen and provided for the event by ordering Bernadotte to march with Davout and to support him, and that Bernadotte for some technical reason of precedence or priority had disobeyed his order, and had marched in another direction to Camburg and Dornburg. If this version of the incident had been the true one, it would have completely exonerated Napoleon from the imputation of want of forethought. It was believed to be the true version and for more than a century misled the best historians.¹ "When such mistakes arose," writes Lieutenant-Colonel Titteux, of the French General Staff, "Napoleon sought to conceal them by falsifying history and blaming his generals. He refused to acknowledge Davout's victory at Auerstadt as a separate battle . . . and he announced that he had given orders to Bernadotte to support Davout."²

A week passed before any charge was made against Bernadotte from Headquarters. On the 20th he was ordered to throw a bridge over the Elbe at Barby or at the mouth of the Saale. On the 21st a letter was written by Berthier blaming him for not having carried out the order, which General Dupont declared to have been "absolutely impossible" in the time. This censure was a mere peg upon which to hang a larger accusation. This is pointed out by the French officer who has been before quoted. He writes: "Napoleon never spoke

¹ Cf. Thiers, vii, 130, 131. ² Lt.-Col. Titteux, p. 107.

the truth when it did not serve his own interests. Determined to lay the blame on Bernadotte in a way that should never be forgotten, he commanded him on 20th October to throw a bridge over the Elbe the same day. This being an absolute impossibility in the time named, Napoleon dictated to Berthier a letter for Bernadotte on the 21st October, upbraiding him for disobedience, and referring with much detail to his disobedience at Jena and on other occasions."¹

Berthier's letter begins with a complaint about the bridge, and then proceeds :

BERTHIER TO BERNADOTTE.

" His Majesty, who is much annoyed at your failure to execute his orders, reminds you in this connection that you were not present at the battle of Jena, that your absence might have imperilled the fate of the army, and that it rendered the battle less decisive and more sanguinary than it might have been. Deeply distressed although the Emperor was, he refrained from referring to the matter, because his recollection of your previous services and his personal regard for you induced him to keep silence. But as you have not gone to Calbe, or made any attempt to cross the Elbe either at Barby or at the mouth of the Saale, the Emperor has decided to let you know his mind, as he is not accustomed to see his military operations sacrificed to vain questions of the etiquette of command (*parce qu'il n'est point accoutumé à voir sacrifier ses opérations à de vaines étiquettes de commandement*)."²

This letter reached Bernadotte on the evening of the 21st. He replied at 8 p.m. After dealing with the charge of delay in crossing the Elbe he proceeds:—

BERNADOTTE TO BERTHIER

" It is not my fault, Duke, that I did not take a great part in the affair of Jena. I wrote to you at the time

¹ Lt.-Col. Titteux, 137.

² Foucart, i. 186, 187.

explaining to you the obstacles which obstructed my march on the eve of the battle. It was only three o'clock in the morning, when I was informed of the contents of your letter addressed to Marshal Davout, in which it was stated that the Emperor attached great importance to my being at Dornburg. I started without losing an instant. I marched with all possible haste, and reached Dornburg at eleven o'clock. I would have even then been in time to fulfil His Majesty's wishes, if the defile of Dornburg, the character of which all the world is aware of, had not lost me infinite time. . . . In spite of these difficulties I marched with one division of my cavalry, and arrived at Appolda at four o'clock, in time to cause the retreat of the enemy who were engaged with Marshal Davout, and I took five guns and more than a thousand prisoners, including a whole battalion. I repeat, Duke, I could not possibly have done more. I did all that was humanly possible. It is very painful to me to have to descend into these details. I am convinced that I did my duty. No greater misfortune could befall me than to displease the Emperor. I should be inconsolable, if I had not the utmost confidence in his sense of justice. . . .¹

Whether or not Bernadotte wrote a duplicate of this letter to the Emperor himself, as was a usual practice with the Marshals, it was the Emperor who closed this correspondence with the following letter :—

" THE EMPEROR TO MARSHAL BERNADOTTE, PRINCE OF PONTE CORVO.

" WITTENBERG, *23rd October, 1806.*

" I have received your letter. It is not my custom to indulge in recrimination over the irremediable past. Your army corps were absent from the field of battle ; and its absence might have had disastrous consequences. In obedience to a very precise order you ought to have been at Dornburg, one of the principal passes of the Saale, on the same day that Marshal Lannes was at

¹ Foucart, ii. 200, 204.

Jena, Marshal Augereau at Kahla, and Marshal Davout at Naumburg. *I let you know in the night that if you had not carried out that movement and if you were still at Naumburg, you were to march after Marshal Davout and support him.* You were at Naumburg when that order arrived, and it was communicated to you. Nevertheless, you chose to make a useless march back to Dornburg, and consequently you were absent from the battle, and Marshal Davout sustained the main attack of the enemy. Certainly this is all very unfortunate. Circumstances have in the meantime given you the opportunity of proving your zeal. Other opportunities will present themselves for demonstrating your talents and your attachment to my person. NAPOLEON."¹

The passage which has been italicised contains the real sting and the real significance of the Emperor's accusation. It suggests that, in the night of the 13th-14th October, he had ordered Bernadotte to support Davout at Auerstadt. At St. Helena he stated with even greater definiteness that "Bernadotte had orders to support Marshal Davout so as to defend . . . the field of the battle of Auerstadt."² This has been described by the American historian, Sloane, as "a double-meaning statement intended to place the blame for Davout's exposure on Bernadotte's slow movements."³ The "order to support" Davout consisted of the ambiguous passage in the despatch to Davout, "*si le Maréchal Bernadotte se trouvait avec vous, vous pourriez marcher ensemble,*"⁴ accompanied by the expression of a hope that he was at Dornburg, for which place his army was already on the road. The message was not an unequivocal order to march with Davout, still less to support him, least of all to support him on the field of battle of Auerstadt. The Emperor did not know that Davout would need support, or that he would meet the main Prussian Army at Auerstadt, and

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, 11060. ² Montholon, i. 215, 217. ³ Sloane, ii. 282.

⁴ see p. 139 *supra*.

was incredulous the next day when he was informed that he had done so. It is now recognised that it was only when he found that he was being criticised for having been ignorant of the position of the King of Prussia's army, and for having left Davout to fight it unsupported, that he asserted, and perhaps brought himself to believe, that he had ordered Bernadotte to support Davout. "If the credit was due to Davout," writes Colonel Lloyd in the *Cambridge Modern History*, "blame might seem to attach to the strategy which left him to fight against such odds. This caused Napoleon to be more severe on Bernadotte."¹ Another writer has thus enforced the same point: "The Emperor . . . to cover up his own mistake, asserted that he had sent him (Bernadotte) orders to go to Davout's assistance, but a careful examination of the French despatches proves that no such document existed, in fact the official despatches completely exonerate Bernadotte."²

Mr. Holland Rose writes that "for his absence from the battlefield Bernadotte has been bitterly blamed on the strength of an assertion that Napoleon during the night of the 13th-14th sent him an order to support Davout. This order has never been produced, and it finds no place in the latest and fullest collection of French despatches, which however contain some that fully exonerate Bernadotte. Unfortunately for Bernadotte's fame the tattle of memoir-writers³ is more attractive and gains more currency than the prosaic facts of despatches."⁴ The translator of Marbot's *Memoirs* makes a similar protest, and, states that the story, as told by Marbot, "was probably invented, when it became the cue of Bonapartist writers to blacken the Marshal by every possible means."

¹ *Cambridge Modern History*, ix. 277.

² Dunn Pattison, *Napoleon's Marshals*, 81.

³ He is alluding to Savary, Marbot and De Ségur.

⁴ Rose's *Life of Napoleon*, ii. 99, 100.

The accusation which Napoleon launched on the 23rd October is directly contradicted by his bulletin of the battle. On the 15th October, the day after the battle, he had issued the 5th bulletin of the Grand Army, in which he described the position assigned to each army corps on the previous day. If his letter of the 23rd October was well founded we should expect to find it stated in the bulletin that on the night before the battle Bernadotte had been ordered to support Davout at Auerstadt, and that he was intended to march with Davout and to debouch with him at Kosen. But we find, on the contrary, the following declaration in the bulletin: "The corps of the Marshal Prince of Ponte Corvo was on the march to Dornburg. . . . The corps of the Marshal Prince of Corvo was destined to debouch from Dornburg so as to fall on the rear of the enemy."¹ This was the very thing which Bernadotte did. What he failed to do was to reach his destination in time for the battle.

The following are the conclusions which the present writer has arrived at as to Bernadotte's absence from the battles of the 14th October:—

(1) In marching to Camburg and Dornburg, in occupying these two bridges, and in debouching from Dornburg, Bernadotte carried out the last orders sent to his corps, namely, the order to Murat from the Emperor sent at 9 a.m. on the 13th October (Foucart, i. 579, 580). In doing so he carried out the intention of the Emperor as stated in his bulletin on the morning after the battle (*Corr. de Nap.*, 11009).

(2) Where Bernadotte failed was in being late for the battle. He would have been in time if he had made a night march on the night of the 13th as he had originally intended to do. Not to have done so turned out to have been an error of judgment. But the error was not without excuse. He was the only Marshal who was left without

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, 11009.

orders; and the battle was fixed for the 15th, so that he expected to have the 14th to get into line.

(3) When Napoleon changed his mind on the night of the 13th, and issued his orders for a battle next day, Bernadotte was again omitted from the orders. He received an equivocal message to the effect that he "might" march with Davout, which he construed as leaving him a discretion. There was some conversation upon a question of *etiquette de commandement*, but this was not the motive of Bernadotte's action. He had been ordered to go to Dornburg; he was already posted on the road to that place; the message said it was important he should be there; and he went there.

(4) It is quite true that, if he had marched with Davout, Bernadotte's corps would have served to equalise the numbers, when Davout met and fought the main Prussian Army at Auerstadt. But neither Davout nor Bernadotte nor Napoleon expected that Davout would meet the main Prussian Army at Auerstadt.

(5) When Napoleon found that he was being criticised for having left Davout unsupported at Auerstadt, he took advantage of Bernadotte's absence from the battle, and made the specious accusation that Bernadotte had disobeyed an order to support Davout on that occasion. The suggestion of a jealous and malignant design on Bernadotte's part to leave Davout in the lurch was a colourable fringe added to this accusation.

(6) The charges made against Bernadotte by Davout and by his Aide-de-Camp of neglect to send supports to Davout from Camburg and of failure to pursue the enemy on the evening of the battle were never adopted by Napoleon or by any well informed and competent military critic.

How far Bernadotte may have fallen into errors of judgment when left without orders on the evening and night of the 13th October 1806 is a question upon which

military opinions differ. But it is generally agreed that he stands acquitted at the bar of history of the accusation of disobedience which had its origin in Napoleon's desire to screen a mistake of his own, and of the suggestions of treachery and baseness which found ready credence when a subsequent stage of his career made him an object of national resentment.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE PURSUIT OF THE PRUSSIANS BY THE THREE MARSHALS

OCTOBER 23—NOVEMBER 5, 1806

"La poursuite des trois Maréchaux."—HENRI HOUSSAYE.

"C'est une espèce de chasse."—NAPOLEON.

ON the 23rd October the three Marshals, Murat, Bernadotte, and Soult, had completed the first stage of their chase of the enemy. A week had been occupied in covering a distance of about a hundred miles. They had reached the banks of the Elbe. Each commander had his own course to run and his own quarry to pursue. Soult in the west was dogging the footsteps of the Duke of Weimar. In the centre Bernadotte, after crossing the Elbe on the 22nd October, followed close on the heels of General Blücher. Murat was to move in an easterly direction in pursuit of Prince Hohenlohe. Up to this point Bernadotte by the storming of Halle and by the defeat of the Prince of Wurtemberg's Army, had eclipsed the performances of the two others.

Now it was the turn of Murat, the finest cavalry leader of his day, who had as his brigadiers three of the most brilliant *sabreurs* of the Grand Army, Lassalle, Milhaud, and Grouchy. On the 25th October Lassalle with a vanguard of 1,500 cavaliers caught the Prussian rearguard, and cut up two famous regiments, the Dragoons of Queen Louise, and the Black Hussars of Schimmelpfennig. He then pushed on towards Prenzlau, where Murat came up, and without waiting for Marshal Lannes, who was to support him with a large infantry force, carried the faubourgs of the town by sheer

brilliancy of cavalry work, driving the Prussians before him in wild confusion. Their commander, Prince Hohenlohe, thinking it prudent to imitate Murat by not waiting for Lannes, surrendered with his whole force, consisting of 16,000 infantry, six regiments of cavalry, sixty guns, and sixty standards.

Striking as the victory of Prenzlau was, it was overshadowed by the sequel. It now became Murat's task to cut off Blücher from escaping into Pomerania or East Prussia. With this object in view he sent forward small vanguards, consisting of 700 men under General Lassalle and 500 men under General Milhaud.

These small reconnoitring parties—because for practical purposes they were little more—performed prodigies, which would be incredible if they were not attested by undeniable evidence. On the 29th Milhaud appeared before the garrisoned town of Pasewalk, and coolly demanded its surrender. Such was the prevalent panic that the Commandant tamely capitulated, and 5,000 Prussian soldiers laid down their arms before Milhaud's 500 cavaliers.

General Milhaud's capture of Pasewalk paled into insignificance beside General Lassalle's capture of Stettin on the same day. Stettin was a seaport guarded by ancient fortifications, which had been strengthened by Frederick the Great. Lassalle sighted the city from the neighbouring heights. Instead of waiting for Marshals Murat and Lannes he conceived the apparently preposterous idea of calling upon the Governor to hand over the keys of the city forthwith; and he backed his audacious request by planting upon a prominent position the only thing in the nature of artillery that he could lay his hands on, which was an empty powder-wagon. It sufficed for the purpose. The Commandant handed over the keys of the fortified city with its garrison of 5,500 men to Lassalle and his 700 Hussars—perhaps the most marvellous capitulation in the whole range

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of history! Murat now shaped his course for Lübeck along the shores of the Baltic.

The effect of these successes of Murat's corps was to head off the remnants of the Prussian Army under Blücher from Pomerania and from East Prussia, and to compel them to wheel westwards towards the city of Lübeck, followed closely by Bernadotte, who, since the fall of Halle, had marched 150 miles and had taken 3,000 prisoners. He now swung round to the west in Blücher's path, and made for Waren, where he was joined by Soult on the 1st November. Meanwhile Napoleon from Berlin was ceaselessly spurring his three Marshals forward. To Murat he wrote on the 31st October: "Nothing has been accomplished as yet. You have still 25,000 men to take."¹ His message to Bernadotte ran as follows: "Not an instant's repose until you have disposed of the last man of the army."²

When the Prussians turned to the west Napoleon wrote to Murat: "In view of the turn of events you should assign to Marshal Bernadotte a special *débouché*."³ Whatever may have been the exact meaning of this phrase, it indicated a desire to give the disgraced Marshal a chance of distinction. Perhaps it was inspired by a touch of remorse. Bernadotte was eager for such an opportunity. On the 30th October he wrote to Berthier from New Brandenburg that he was leaving behind all his "lame and halt" and all his artillery except six guns and 2,000 rounds of ammunition. He added that he was pushing forward with 12,000 men, which he considered sufficient to dispose of the enemy.

On the 1st November Bernadotte came up with Blücher's rearguard near Waren. Owing to the situation of the ground he was only able to bring 6,000 men into action against some 12,000 to 14,000 Prussians. His Light Infantry pressed back the enemy to a deep wood, from which they were dislodged with difficulty. They

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, 11121. ² Foucart, ii. 452. ³ Foucart, ii. 458.

next offered a desperate resistance in an advantageous position between the lake of Fleesen and the marches of Nossentin, from which they retired to an open plain which had to be attacked along a narrow defile. Here the French suffered severely, but ultimately drove the enemy before them until the fighting was stopped by darkness. In his report to the Emperor the Marshal stated: "If I had had two hours more of daylight, I would have captured half the enemy's forces."¹

In this affair Bernadotte had a very narrow escape. While General Dupont was driving the enemy out of the wood, the Marshal ordered the 5th Chasseurs to cut off the Prussian retreat. The Chasseurs mistook the direction; and Bernadotte galloped to their head, ordering them to turn to the right. The Chasseurs were going so fast that they could not stop themselves and failed to execute the movement. The Marshal and his horse were thrown down, and the regiment rode over their bodies. When they had passed, Bernadotte picked himself up, remounted, and remained in action for the rest of the day. This was a strange adventure for a Marshal commanding an Army Corps; but it was noticed that Bernadotte exposed himself in these operations with a desperation, which was attributed by onlookers to a desire to atone for his absence from Jena and Auerstadt.²

At 3 a.m. the next morning (2nd November) Bernadotte resumed the pursuit, and, after five days spent in daily combats with the enemy's rearguard, found himself in sight of Lübeck. In his reports to the Emperor he complained of his lack of cavalry. This was recognised by Napoleon, who wrote to Davout: "Want of cavalry has prevented Marshal Bernadotte from taking full advantage of his success."³ At Crivitz his small cavalry

¹ Foucart, ii. 529.

² *Ib.*; *Corr. de Nap.*, 11167, where the Emperor mentions this accident.

³ *Corr. de Nap.*, 11199.

force gave way until the Marshal personally took the lead and rallied them to a successful charge. The Journal of the First Army Corps records that: "The Marshal was with his men in the middle of the *mêlée* in the thick of the enemy."¹

Meanwhile, Marshal Murat, having completed his independent march along the Baltic coast-line without having met with any serious opposition, reached the rendezvous. On the 5th November the three Marshals, after a pursuit extending over nearly four hundred miles, were at the gates of Lübeck, where Blücher and his 25,000 men—constituting the remnant of the Prussian Army—had taken refuge. The game was up, because Lübeck was an *impasse* from which there was no reasonable chance of escape.²

¹ Foucart, ii. 673.

² Petre, 306, 307.

CHAPTER XXV

THE CAPTURE OF LÜBECK

NOVEMBER 6-25, 1806

"My cousin, I have received the standards, which you sent me. I have observed with pleasure the activity and talents which you have displayed in the course of recent events, and the distinguished valour of your troops. I testify to you my satisfaction, and you can rely upon my gratitude."—*Napoleon to Bernadotte after the storming of Lübeck.*

THE chase was over. The quarry had been run to earth. In his 29th Bulletin Napoleon announced that the combined movements of the Grand Duke of Berg, Marshal Soult, and the Prince of Ponte Corvo had stopped every loophole, and that the enemy, finding themselves anticipated at every point, had taken refuge in Lübeck.¹

The storming of Lübeck by Bernadotte was a spirited and daring feat of arms. The Marshal started for the attack at 2 a.m. on the morning of the 6th November with all his troops. The city was surrounded by marshes and water, and had to be attacked by a causeway leading to the principal gate, which was strongly fortified with bastions placed on either side of the entrance and bristling with heavy guns so as to cover the approach to gate. In front of this formidable position all the Prussian infantry were posted with their field artillery. The French troops faced all these obstacles with the utmost *sang froid*. Advancing with the light infantry in front, the attacking columns forced the enemy's vanguard to retreat behind the redoubts, abandoning

¹ Foucart, ii. 800; *Corr. de Nap.*, 11223.

the field guns, and entered the city in their wake under a murderous fire from the bastions. Bernadotte swept the city with his troops in the face of severe resistance, and opened the Ratzeburg gate to Marshals Soult and Murat. His losses were about 1,000, while that of the enemy included about 3,000 killed or wounded and 5,000 prisoners. "At Lübeck," writes M. Pingaud, "he (Bernadotte) displayed once more all his brilliant ardour of former days."¹

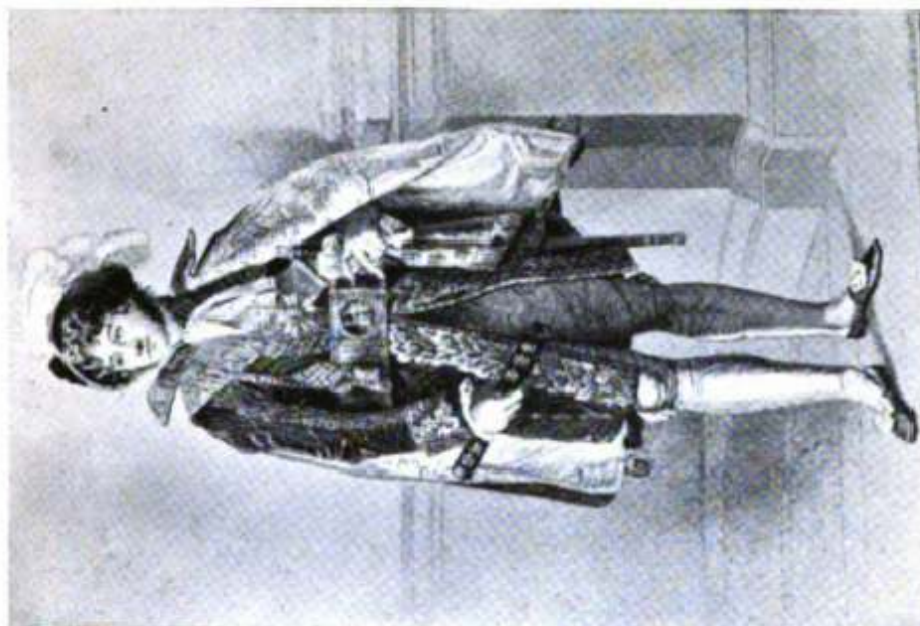
On 8th November Bernadotte wrote a personal letter to the Emperor announcing General Blücher's surrender, and drawing attention to the inclusion among the fifty-one captured standards of Swedish as well as Prussian flags. "Your Majesty," he wrote, "will see with pleasure the ensigns of the Great Frederick beside those of Gustavus Adolphus." He recounted all his losses in killed and wounded since the combat of Halle, and added: "I shall consider myself fortunate if I have been able to satisfy your Majesty's expectations by the marches which I have made, and the combats in which I have been engaged." On the following day the Marshal sent the enemy's standards to the Emperor with the following note: "I beg of Your Majesty to be so kind as to accept this tribute, offered by the First Corps of the Grand Army, to their august Chief, as a fresh gage of our boundless devotion to your sacred person."

Napoleon's reply of the 13th November went far to countervail his recent rebuke. The Emperor wrote: "My Cousin, I have received the standards which you sent me. I have observed with pleasure the activity and the talents which you have displayed in the course of recent events, and the distinguished valour of your troops. I testify to you my satisfaction, and you can count upon my gratitude." He had already, on 9th November, issued the following Order of the Day: "The Emperor signifies his satisfaction to the Grand

¹ Pingaud, 75. ² Lafosse i, 355-360. ³ Corr. de Nap., 11,250.



MARSHAL SOULT
Duke of Dalmatia 1808



MARSHAL MURAT
Grand Duke of Berg and Cleves 1806

Duke of Berg (Murat), to the Prince of Ponte Corvo (Bernadotte), and to Marshal Soult, and to the troops under their command, for their brilliant conduct at Lübeck, and for the activity which they evinced in pursuing the enemy."¹ These communications by no means satisfied Bernadotte, who complained that the Bulletins divided the honours of Lübeck equally between the three Marshals, when the burden and heat of the day had fallen on his own army corps. This complaint was not aimed at Murat, who appears to have held back, in obedience to the Emperor's hint,² in order to allow Bernadotte to have the glory of the day. It appears that there were some who claimed the honours of the day for Soult. But we have the independent testimony of Colonel Pion des Loches, an officer serving in Soult's army, who states that Soult took no part in the storming of the place, and that it was Bernadotte who carried the city by the assault and opened the gates to Soult.³

In Lübeck, Bernadotte left behind him a favourable impression, which deserves to be recorded in justice to what was the best side of his character. In a letter from a resident, M. de Villiers, to the Countess Fanny de Beauharnais, we read: "On the morning of the 6th the cannonading began from three French Army Corps. Bullets and shells whistled over the town and fell in many places. Thanks to the noble Prince of Ponte Corvo, the damage was less on the side of his attack. The house in which I was staying was assigned to the Prince of Ponte Corvo, and a guard was soon posted outside. Marshal Bernadotte returned wearied after the day's exertion, holding in his hand his sword, which he had already used to defend several houses from pillage. 'Madame,' he said to the lady of the house, 'I do not come here to do you good, but I come to do you as little harm as possible.' Shortly afterwards

¹ Berthier, ii. 176. ² See page 162 *supra*. ³ Pion des Loches, 193.

dinner was announced. He invited Mr. and Mrs. R. and myself, and we dined with him every evening during his stay, which lasted till the 22nd. He treated us with especial consideration. and kindness. He allowed me to bear the title of his secretary, and authorised me to stop violence when I could." ¹

M. de Villiers' evidence is corroborated by the recent publication of the despatches and Orders of the Day which were issued in this campaign. In one of them Bernadotte announced the appointment of a military commission with power to condemn to death every soldier of the First Army Corps who should be found pillaging or rifling the houses in the city. It proceeded: "The inhabitants of Lübeck and their territory are placed under the protection of His Majesty the Emperor and King. Every soldier who does them any injury is guilty of a crime." ²

Other instances of the conduct of Bernadotte's corps and of the impression which he made on the people have been recorded. For example, Captain Clary, his nephew and Aide-de-Camp, received a bullet wound in the shoulder while personally intervening to protect life and property. A Prussian officer, Captain Kolner, was treated so kindly by the Marshal, who sent him to his home in Dusseldorf with a replenished purse, that he refused ever again to fight against France.³ Thirty years afterwards the Burgomaster of Lübeck at a local banquet given to the Swedish *chargé d'affaires* said: "This is the anniversary of the day upon which thirty years ago the Prince of Ponte Corvo preserved our city from pillage and from the horrors of war." ⁴

On the eve of the Marshal's departure the Council of Lübeck presented him with six fine saddle horses and a farewell address, in which occurred the following passage,

¹ *Mémoires secrets de M. le Comte d'Allonville*, v.

² Foucart, ii. 783, 784, 824 n. ³ *Victoires Conquêtes*, xvi. 378, 379 n.

⁴ Lafosse, i. 357 n.

which reads strangely when we remember that it came from the governing body of a free city to its conqueror : " May these horses safely carry your Highness on the fields of battle, and may they bring you back to our midst our honoured guest in the hour of peace, our benefactor whose remembrance shall ever be dear to us." ¹

One of the most interesting episodes of the taking of Lübeck was the capture of 1,600 Swedish soldiers, mostly natives of the province of Ostrogothia, commanded by Colonel Count Mörner. The Marshal loaded his prisoners with courtesies and attentions, and turned his own lodgings into a prison-cell for their Colonel, who reported to his Government that he had been very well treated by Bernadotte, and added that the Marshal had remarked to him that " it was not in accordance with nature that Norway should belong to Denmark, but that she should be annexed to Sweden." ²

Bernadotte's treatment of these Swedish prisoners contributed very powerfully to his selection, nearly four years afterwards, as the popular candidate for the succession to the Swedish throne. We shall find that in that extraordinary episode, Count Mörner, and another member of the Mörner family, were to play very important parts, and that these Ostrogothian prisoners influenced the result. Some writers have suggested that the Marshal had future eventualities in his mind's eye, and that by his graceful politeness to these captives he was indulging in a characteristic piece of " political coquetry." But he could not have foreseen the deposition of the Swedish King in 1809, and the unexpected death of the young Swedish Heir Apparent in 1810. Readers of *The First Phase* will remember that, even in the wild wars of the Revolution, he was always assiduous in his attention to the comforts

¹ F. O. (Sweden), 73/76 (containing extract from a North German newspaper). ² *Ib.*

of prisoners.¹ Besides, he treated them on this occasion with no lenity until they were in his power. His summons to surrender was a very stern one, and was made "on pain of being cut to pieces." His treatment of the Swedish prisoners was in accordance with his habitual practice.

After order had been restored in Lübeck, Bernadotte proceeded to Boitzenberg, on the Elbe, in order to cut off the last fragment of General Blücher's army, which had escaped to the south under General Pelet. Thus closed the pursuit, the results of which were graphically described in the following passage from Napoleon's 32nd Bulletin: "After the fall of Magdeburg and the affair of Lübeck, the Campaign of Prussia is entirely finished. . . . Of the enemy's 126,000 men not a man has escaped. Of the Duke of Weimar's corps not a man has escaped. Of the Duke of Wurtemberg's reserve corps, which was beaten at Halle, not a man has escaped. . . . The corps of the Prince of Ponte Corvo and of Marshal Soult are on the march to Berlin. . . . Marshal Soult will arrive on the 20th, and the Prince of Ponte Corvo a few days later."²

Bernadotte was now summoned to take part in a fresh campaign. Leaving a battalion to garrison Lübeck the Marshal started on 19th November and arrived on 28th November in Berlin to find that Napoleon and the Grand Army had already departed for Posen. He was only allowed one day in the Prussian capital to rest his infantry. On 25th November he was again on the march for the "ice-and-mud bound wilderness of Prussian Poland."³

Before we leave the subject of the campaign of 1806, let us revert to the vexed topic of Bernadotte's absence from the battles of the 14th October, and, in the light

¹ *Bernadotte, The First Phase*, 128.

² *Corr. de Nap.*, 11270.

³ *Mathieu Dumas*, xvii. 407.

of subsequent events, let us ask ourselves a few simple questions. Is it credible that the Marshal, who pursued the Prussians to Lübeck, was guilty of disobedience or of any conscious dereliction of duty on the day of Jena? Is it not evident that the Emperor never really entertained such a notion? If we cannot bring ourselves to concur in the verdict of Lt.-Col. Titteux, who has acquitted the Marshal of all blame, is it not reasonable to attribute his shortcomings on that day to errors of judgment in interpreting and carrying out instructions which were both defective and ambiguous? The sinister versions of the incident which obtained currency after the fall of the Empire, are irreconcilable with the activity and gallantry which he displayed in the rest of the campaign, and with the confidence which the Emperor, with a full and fresh knowledge of all the circumstances, continued to repose in him.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE CAMPAIGN OF POLAND¹—WINTER QUARTERS— REQUISITIONS AND REPROACHES

NOVEMBER 1806—JANUARY 1807

"He" (Bernadotte) "seemed to me very different from our other Generals. In the first place he was perfectly amiable."—Duc DE FREZENSA, December 1806.

NAPOLÉON had crushed Austria in 1805, and Prussia in 1806. It was Russia's turn next. The news of the victories of Jena and Auerstadt, and of the fall of Lübeck, had been received by the Russian Government and people with mingled feelings. Their first impression was one of joy at the defeat of Prussia. But a reaction soon set in. The instinct of national self-preservation asserted its sway. Public opinion became dominated by fear of foreign aggression, and by hate of the aggressor.

The Emperor Alexander now came forward as the defender of the King of Prussia, and of his brave and beautiful Queen. Napoleon cleverly countermined this rapprochement by exploiting the patriotism and the national sentiment of Poland. His brilliant victories kindled Polish hopes, while his artful phrases fanned them into flames. He opened vague vistas of a great "perhaps" by reminding the Poles that "destiny rewards nations in proportion to their courage and their energy." Expectations were aroused of an independent Poland under a French Prince or Marshal;

¹ For the Campaign in Poland special use has been made of *Précis des Événements Militaires*, par Le Général Comte Mathieu Dumas; of *Napoleon's Campaign in Poland*, by F. Lorraine Petre; and of the *Mémoires du Général Bennigsen*.

and the names of Murat, Davout, and Bernadotte were freely mentioned as possible kings. Napoleon encouraged these vain illusions without making any definite promise. He was intent upon using the Poles, rather than upon serving them.

Bernadotte joined Napoleon at Posen in Prussian Poland upon the 8th December. They had not met since the morning of the combat of Schleiz on the 8th October. Their relations in the interval had been chequered by vicissitudes. The cloud which had been created by the Marshal's absence from Jena had been dispersed by the vigour of his pursuit of the enemy and by his successes at Halle and Lübeck.

The Emperor now selected Bernadotte as he had done in the campaign of 1805, for a post which would involve the responsibility for detached and separate operations. He gave him the command of the left wing. Ney and Bessières were subordinated to him "as the senior Marshal"; and in this way the *etiquette de commandement*, which he had been blamed for claiming at Naumburg, was recognised.¹ An historian of the campaign refers to the selection in the following terms: "In command of the left wing was Marshal Bernadotte, Prince of Ponte Corvo, afterwards King of Sweden. Calm, selfish, calculating, and astute, of much more polished manners than most of Napoleon's Marshals, he was endowed with considerable powers of command. Him the Emperor could, as far as ability was concerned, trust in a semi-independent command."² His ability was soon to be severely tested.

The campaign opened on the 16th December, when Napoleon left Posen for Warsaw, while Bernadotte branched off to Thorn. Leaving a division at Thorn, he pushed forward, fighting his way for a week along the Grodno Road. Christmas Day saw the completion of his allotted task, which was to cut off the Prussians

¹ Petre, 77.

² *Ib.*, 41.

from the rest of the enemy's army, and to compel them to retreat towards Koenigsberg.¹

Bernadotte, in writing of these operations, speaks of the roads and the weather conditions as frightful. He says that the army could not cover more than two or three leagues in a day, and that it was impossible to transport artillery. There were no metalled roads, and the armies had to stumble and plunge and slide through a land of lakes, marshes, mud, and ice, amidst torrents of rain and snow, with frequent and sudden alternations of frost and thaw. "And they call this their country!" exclaimed the French soldiers, puzzled at the patriotism of the Poles, and thinking lovingly of their "*belle France*." Nevertheless, they followed the example of patient fortitude which was set by the Emperor who campaigned for a fortnight without taking off his boots.

During these operations we meet an example of the complaints which Bernadotte from time to time levelled against Berthier. On the 27th December he wrote to the Emperor: "The Major General (Marshal Berthier) writes to Marshal Bessi res that he has no information from me. Yet I write to him every day."²

Meanwhile the rest of the army, which was covering Warsaw, fought two severe engagements at Pultusk and Golymin. In his 47th Bulletin Napoleon represented these affairs as victories,³ but the affair of Pultusk was so inconclusive that it has been spoken of as the first occasion, since the fateful day of St. Jean d'Arc, that he suffered any check in a fight in which he was personally at the head of his troops. The Emperor now called a halt, and on 28th December ordered his army into Winter Quarters.

A glimpse of Marshal Bernadotte during his operations on the Grodno Road is to be found in the *Souvenirs* of

¹ Bennigsen, i, 114; Mathieu Dumas, xvii. 190, 459.

² Petre, 76/77; Mathieu Dumas, xvii. 865.

³ Sarrans, 171; *Cor. de Nap.*, 11521.

the Duke de Fezensac, who was sent to him by Marshal Ney with despatches on Christmas Eve. He writes : " Having been sent to Marshal Bernadotte . . . I looked for him in vain at Biezun, and found him in the morning in a village about three leagues from the town. I rode with him for three leagues as far as a village near Mlawa. . . . It was the only occasion that I ever met the future King of Sweden, who seemed to me very different from our other generals. In the first place he was perfectly amiable to everyone. That is the first difference. He was particularly so to me, although he only knew me by name. He messed with his Aide-de-Camps and with officers like myself who were on a mission. My horse was very tired, so he gave me another to ride with him. When I left him in the evening, the weather was awful. I said with a laugh that I would try not to drop his despatch in the snow. He offered to keep me until the morning, and to explain to Marshal Ney in a postscript to his despatch that he had done so. I thanked him, but said that I must not lose a minute in returning to my post. He had passed the evening questioning the man at whose house he was lodged about the condition of the country and the customs of the people. I feel sure that he had some hope that they would think of him in Poland (*i.e.*, for the throne) ; and he was seeking to procure information which might be useful to him, as well as to make partisans and friends everywhere." ¹

In January 1807 Bernadotte took up Winter Quarters on the extreme left of the Grand Army on the Baltic coast. He remained in command of the left wing, which comprised his own corps and Ney's, in all about 55,000 men.² His principal duties were to cover the sieges of Danzig and Graudenz, which were then proceeding, and to prevent any communications between those places and Koenigsberg. There was great difficulty in finding supplies for the army. Bernadotte found them at

¹ Duc de Fezensac, 131, 132. ² Mathieu Dumas, xvii. 302.

Elbing, where, as our Foreign Office was informed, he made "requisitions for cloth, leather, forage, and provisions."¹ Ney, who raided the whole countryside to within forty miles of Koenigsberg, was severely reproved, and a courtmartial was even hinted at.

Napoleon afterwards attributed the Russian advance to Eylau to these proceedings of Bernadotte and Ney, and represented them as motivated by cupidity and a desire to make money. But, in two contemporaneous letters to Bernadotte, he referred to Elbing as a source of supplies for the army²; and several independent writers have entirely exculpated Bernadotte and Ney from any imputation of personal gain, and have maintained that the Russian advance was planned before they made any requisitions. The truth appears to be that they were trying to supply their army in a country which Ney described as a "veritable cemetery," and that their proceedings may have precipitated, but did not cause, the Russian movement.³

¹ F. O. 60/74.

² *Corr. de Nap.*, 11896, 11905 (Letters of 27th and 28th Feb., 1807).

³ See Savary, ii. 25; Picard, 526 n.; Jomini, ii. 251.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE COMBAT OF MOHRUNGEN

JANUARY—FEBRUARY 1807

"An achievement characteristic of soldiers who obey no motive but that of honour."—*Napoleon in reference to Bernadotte's night march to Mohrungen, January 1807.*

"Mohrungen, un combat dont il (Bernadotte) se tira à son honneur."
—"Le Maréchal Lannes," *par Thoumas, p. 194.*

BERNADOTTE was not allowed much time to hibernate in his winter quarters. Three weeks had hardly elapsed when the Russians under General Bennigsen initiated a rapid forward movement, one of the objects of which was to cut off the left wing from the rest of the Grand Army. On the 23rd January he suddenly swept down on one of Bernadotte's outposts at Liebstadt, where a small garrison of 200 men made a gallant but hopeless defence. From Liebstadt Bennigsen advanced towards Mohrungen, another French outpost with a garrison consisting of a regiment of hussars and two companies of light infantry.

It was on the next day, 24th January, that Bernadotte received the news of the fall of Liebstadt, and of the projected attack upon Mohrungen. There was not a moment to be lost. He resolved to stop the Russian advance at once and at all costs. He sent orders to Generals Drouet and Dupont, who were commanding outlying stations, to concentrate at once upon Mohrungen while he started on a night march for that place which was distant about sixteen leagues. Marching all night, he reached Mohrungen next morning with a tired army.

This prompt and bold proceeding drew the following

eulogy from the Emperor: "What was remarkable was not only the fine conduct of the men, and the skill of the Generals, but the rapidity with which all the corps broke up their camps, and carried out a night march, which would have tried any other troops severely, without having a single man missing when the battlefield was reached. That was an achievement characteristic of soldiers who obey no motive except that of honour."¹

When Bernadotte reached Mohrungen, the Russians were approaching the town. Although his troops were tired and inferior in numbers, he resolved not to await his reinforcements, but to attack the enemy, who had taken up a position in a neighbouring village, and were inundating the surrounding plain with Cossacks. General Drouet arrived in time to take part in this movement, and Bernadotte sent a courier to hurry up General Dupont. The village was the centre of severe fighting, and was several times taken and re-taken.

At one moment the 9th Regiment lost their precious eagle. Their resolute and successful effort to recover it was one of the turning points in the combat, which ended in the capture of the village. The eagle was the rallying point of every regiment in the Grand Army; and Napoleon, who never lost an opportunity of emphasising its sacredness, thus describes the incident: "The eagle of the 9th Light Infantry was captured by the enemy, but the soldiers at the spectacle of an affront which would have disgraced their brave regiment for ever, and which the glory of a hundred victorious combats could not have wiped out, were inspired with inconceivable ardour. They rushed upon the enemy, put them to flight, and recovered their eagle."²

The French were now reinforced by the arrival of General Dupont, which gave them the numerical advantage. Dupont proceeded to attack the enemy's right

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, 11737.

² *Ib.*

flank, while Bernadotte himself led the attack in front. The movements co-operated admirably. The enemy, broken in front and shaken in the flank, were completely routed, but not without inflicting some losses on their pursuers.

It was after this engagement that General Bennigsen, who was a Hanoverian by birth, sent back to Bernadotte some personal belongings, which had been raided by Cossacks, with the following message: "I owe this act of courtesy to the paternal manner in which Marshal Bernadotte treated Hanover, my native country, during the time that he commanded in that place."¹ The Cossacks claimed to have seized as part of the Marshal's property some plate bearing the arms of some minor German State, and this claim was made the groundwork of an accusation of pillage against Bernadotte. On the other hand, his servants denied that the plate had been part of his belongings; and it was said, in his defence, that the Cossacks had pretended that they belonged to the French Marshal as a justification for making them booty of war.²

Bourrienne, who was French Minister at Hamburg, mentions in his memoirs that Bernadotte sent him a report of the affair of Mohrungen for publication in the Hamburg newspapers. This statement is confirmed by a despatch of Mr. Thornton's, the English Agent at Hamburg, who transmitted to our Foreign Office a cutting from a Hamburg newspaper giving an account of the fighting at Mohrungen, "which," wrote Thornton, "had been sent by express from Bernadotte to the French Consul at Hamburg with directions to have it published." Bernadotte probably was aware that the Emperor intended to appoint him Governor of the Hanseatic Towns, and he wished in this way to keep himself *en evidence* among the Hanseates.³

¹ Bennigsen, i. 154, *vide* Chapter XV *supra*.

² Petre, 143; Sarrasin, Phil., 42.

³ F. O. 6474.

The fight at Mohrungen, by which, to quote Mr. Rose, Bennigsen's "progress was checked and his design revealed," was Bernadotte's best achievement as Marshal of the Empire. Until Dupont arrived with reinforcements, his position was a critical one. Halle and Lübeck were daring and spirited affairs. But he showed more than daring and spirit on this occasion. There was initiative and foresight, promptitude and alacrity—qualities which he sometimes failed to exhibit when he was carrying out an operation under superior orders.¹

The combat of Mohrungen showed Bernadotte at his best, just as the episode of Jena and Auerstadt had displayed him at his worst. In the affair of Jena and Auerstadt, where he was acting under superiors who left him without orders or with none but equivocal orders, he showed nervousness and indecision. In the case of Mohrungen, where he was in an independent position, and was faced by a sudden emergency, he displayed extraordinary energy and presence of mind. General Zurlinden formed a correct judgment when he wrote of him that "all constraint over-excited his ambitious, self-centred nature. He was naturally suited for an absolutely independent command."²

¹ Mathieu Dumas, xvii. 317, where Bernadotte's activity and resolution, and the valour of his troops, receive unstinted praise.

² "Toute contrainte sur-excitait cette nature ambitieuse, personnelle. Il (Bernadotte) était fait pour commander en toute indépendance."—*Napoleon et ses Maréchaux*, ii. 64.

CHAPTER XXVIII

EYLAU AND SPANDEN

FEBRUARY—JUNE 1807

"It is enough if you communicate to them (*i.e.*, your troops) that love of glory and that zeal for the honour of my army by which you are yourself inspired."—*Napoleon to Bernadotte, January 1807.*

AFTER the affair of Mohrungen Bernadotte retreated to Lobau and to Prussian-Strasburg, where he established his corps on 30th January. Napoleon now resumed the offensive, and ordered a general advance to commence on 1st February. In obedience to these orders the Grand Army rushed onwards, and hurled itself against the Russians in the sanguinary and indecisive battles which were fought at Eylau on 7th February. Bernadotte was at Strasburg, ninety miles away. But no blame attached to him for his absence from this battle, although it was afterwards often thrown at him as a reproach by unscrupulous enemies, and even by Napoleon when in what has been called "one of his disgruntled moods." The facts are very well authenticated, and they throw an illuminating sidelight upon some of the methods of the Grand Army.

It appears that the despatches intended for Bernadotte, ordering him to join the Grand Army, were entrusted by Berthier to young officers fresh from the military school, who were taken prisoners by Cossacks, with the result that the despatches never reached the Marshal. Berthier was afterwards blamed for negligence in having placed such important documents in the hands of inexperienced boys, and some of Bernadotte's friends put it down to his dislike of Bernadotte; but his error is better accounted for by the confidence which

the efficiency of the French cavalry officers had bred at Headquarters, where it was generally assumed that every *sabreur*, however inexperienced, was not only brave and resourceful, as they were, but was also well-acquainted with the roads, which they could not always be. When a subsequent despatch reached Bernadotte on 3rd February, referring to previous despatches, which he had not received, he wrote to Berthier :—

“ BERNADOTTE TO BERTHIER.

“ The orders you inform me were sent on the 31st have never reached me. The bearers were taken prisoners at Lautenberg. They were young officers from the Military School. As I do not know the contents of your Orders of the 31st I am not sure whether my movement towards Kauernick accords with the Emperor's wishes. . . . I am afraid that the despatches intercepted by the enemy may have been very useful to them by making them hasten their retreat.

“ MARSHAL BERNADOTTE, Prince of Ponte Corvo.”¹

Bernadotte's enemies, admitting that the despatch intended for him had miscarried, pretended that he knew from General d'Hautpoul, who was quartered in his neighbourhood, the orders which that General had received, and that he ought to have guessed the contents of the despatches which had been lost. But Napoleon did not take that view when he knew the truth. It is true that after the battle he complained of Bernadotte's absence.² But, after the loss of the despatches had been explained, he took several opportunities of showing that the Marshal retained his entire confidence. On 22nd February, a fortnight after Eylau, he wrote promising to comply with Bernadotte's request to recognise the services of General Dupont, and added : “ I have learnt with pleasure that you are satisfied with the spirit displayed by your troops. It is enough if you can communicate to them that love of glory and that zeal

¹ Bennigsen, i. 181 n.

² Constant, ii. 275.

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for the honour of my Army by which you are yourself inspired." ¹ Then we find the Emperor writing to Bernadotte on 27th February: "I regret to hear that you are unwell. I hope that your indisposition will not turn out to be too serious and that your strong vitality (*la force de l'âme*) will carry you through." On 16th March he wrote: "I have awarded to your brother a retiring pension, and have conferred the post which he has vacated upon his son-in-law. Wishing to give you fresh proofs of my satisfaction, I have appointed your brother a member of the Legion of Honour." ² In later years the Emperor sometimes levelled reproaches at Bernadotte for his absence from the battle of Eylau, but it is not easy to reconcile these reproaches, which were usually uttered in angry or resentful moments, with these contemporaneous expressions and marks of confidence.

For the next three months the Grand Army rested on its oars. Bernadotte remained on the shores of the Baltic in command of its left wing; while Napoleon at the Polish castle of Finkenstein was spinning diplomatic webs with the help of Talleyrand, and was taking agreeable relaxation in the society of Madame Walewska.

The fall of Danzig on the 26th May having relieved him of any fear of being taken in his rear, the Emperor resolved to commence his offensive movement in June, but was surprised when the enemy took the initiative. Early in June they attacked Bernadotte's positions on the lower reaches of the River Passarge, and on the morning of the 4th June an assault was made on the bridge-head at Spanden, which was renewed on the 5th.

At Spanden Bernadotte received a wound in the head from a musket ball, while riding into the middle of the fire to quicken a movement which was being executed too slowly. After he had fallen he tried to retain command, and wrote the following letter to the Chief

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, 11855.

² *Ib.*, 11896, 11905, 11961, 12029.

of the Imperial Staff: "I have been wounded by a ball in the neck. I do not believe my wound is dangerous, but it gives me great pain. Nevertheless, I have not left the field of battle, and you can assure the Emperor that I shall remain on the field so long as my strength enables me to do so."¹

The day was won and Berthier was able to report to the Emperor: "The Prince of Ponte Corvo and Marshal Soult have both been attacked, and have both repulsed the enemy with heavy loss."² The Princess of Ponte Corvo, who remained as unspoiled, attractive, and affectionate as in the days of her girlhood at Marseilles, had already come from Paris to Poland to be near her husband. She arrived in time to act the part of his nurse; and for six weeks the disabled Marshal enjoyed one of the very few intervals of repose and domesticity that were accorded to him during the six years in which he served the Emperor.

Napoleon seems to have been genuinely touched by this incident. The wound was not a serious one, but it illustrated the Marshal's well-known willingness to expose himself in the field, and reminded the Emperor that, if Bernadotte was not always a tractable subject, he was at all events always ready to risk his life in the service of France. When the news reached Headquarters, Berthier wrote to the Marshal: "It is difficult to express, Prince, the pain which the Emperor feels at hearing of your wound, especially at a time when His Majesty has so much need of your talents."³

The impression made upon Napoleon by this incident was more than a passing one. Six months afterwards he wrote a letter to his brother Jerome reproving him for having conferred an estate and a pension of 40,000 francs a year upon a favourite named Lecamus. In this letter he said: "I have Marshals who have won

¹ Bennigsen, ii. 133, n. 4.

² Berthier, ii. 213.

³ Lafosse, i. 397; Hans Kleber, 212.

ten battles, who are covered with wounds, and who have not the reward you have given this Lecamus. . . . If Lecamus has 40,000 francs a year, what is to be given to Marshals Berthier, Lannes, and Bernadotte, and a score of persons who have paid for the throne on which you sit with wounds of every kind ? " ¹

Among the letters which reached the wounded Marshal was one from Madame Récamier, in which sympathy was mingled with reproaches for not having heard from him during the German and Polish campaigns. The following was his reply :—

" MARSHAL BERNADOTTE TO MADAME RECAMIER.

" That I am far from deserving your reproaches, General Junot will be my witness. On the night before Austerlitz I left him at eleven o'clock at night after assuring him that on my return to my bivouac I would write to you. He gave me a thousand messages for you. With my head and my heart absorbed in your troubles, I expressed to you all the pain which your reverse of fortune had caused me. I was speaking to you and occupied with you on the eve of that day which was to decide the destiny of the world. My letter was committed to the post, and should have reached you. When friendship, tenderness, and susceptibility enflame the heart, everything that is expressed is deeply felt. I have never ceased to address to you my hopes and good wishes, and, although fated to be ever your devoted servant, I did not wish to risk wearying you by my letters. Farewell. If you still think of me, believe that you are my chief ideal, and that nothing can equal the tender and affectionate sentiments which I have dedicated to your worship." ²

We are tempted to wonder whether Désirée was looking over the wounded Marshal's shoulder when he penned this high-flown epistle.

¹ *New Letters of Napoleon*, 64, 68.

² Herriot, i. 87.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE HANSEATIC TOWNS—CANNING AND COPENHAGEN JUNE—DECEMBER 1807

"England had lost William Pitt, but under his mantle, which had descended to Canning, a heart was beating that was as dauntless as the great Commoner's." P. 189 *infra*.

WHILE Bernadotte was recovering from his wound, the Emperor brought the Polish Campaign to a triumphant conclusion with the victory of Friedland, by which on the 15th June 1807 he destroyed the Russo-Prussian Army in a day. In a like manner he had destroyed the Austrian Army at Austerlitz on the 2nd December 1805, and the Prussian Army at Jena and at Auerstadt on the 14th October 1806. The European nations had allowed themselves to be demolished one by one. They had not yet learned that union was strength.

The first fruit of Friedland was the famous meeting of the Emperors of France and Russia on a raft moored mid-stream in the River Niemen, which was followed by the Conference and Treaty of Tilsit. So far as Bernadotte was concerned, there were two respects in which the Treaty of Tilsit affected his career. In the first place, it was arranged that the Emperor of Russia was to invade and annex the Swedish Province of Finland, and that a French Army was to co-operate by attacking Swedish territory in some other direction. Bernadotte little thought what significance this transfer of Finland to Russia was destined to have for him. In the second place, Napoleon induced Alexander, much against his will, to join in a resolute effort to exclude British commerce from the Baltic and from the whole coast-line of North Germany. He had already formulated this device,

which was known as "The Continental System," in the notorious Berlin decrees of 1806. Thenceforward this method of striking at England became more than ever the inspiring motive of Napoleon's foreign policy.

With the object of carrying out these two purposes, Napoleon, on the 14th July, a few days after the conclusion of the Treaty of Tilsit, ordered Marshal Bernadotte to occupy the Hanseatic towns, with the rank and title of Governor. He was also appointed Commander-in-Chief of a motley corps which was composed of French, Dutch, and Spanish troops.

The three Hanseatic cities of Hamburg, Bremen, and Lübeck sentinelled the mouths of the three great rivers, the Elbe, the Weser, and the Trave. If Venice deserved the title of the Queen of the Adriatic, the Hanseatic Towns might fitly have been described as the three Sovereign Princesses of the Northern Seas. They were free communities whose citizens set a high price upon their political independence and upon their commercial prosperity. They received no share of the benefits which accrued to some other German States from French protection. To them the Napoleonic *régime* carried unqualified mischief. Their territories were burdened with the occupation of Imperial troops, and their citizens were harried by Imperial tax-gatherers. Their seafaring men were forced into the Imperial Navy. Their extensive trade with England was paralysed by the Continental System. For them the Imperial yoke spelt humiliation, ruin, and despair. Bernadotte's first duty was to increase the number of troops quartered upon the inhabitants in view of the coming hostilities against Sweden. The Government of these Towns was not likely to be a bed of roses for the French Marshal.

Bernadotte arrived at Hamburg unexpectedly on the 23rd July to take up his new duties. His post was as much a diplomatic as a military one; and the situation in which he was placed was delicate and complex. The

effect of the Treaty of Tilsit had been to make the Emperor Alexander and the Emperor Napoleon the masters of Continental Europe. The real significance of the Treaty lay in its secret clauses. Their object was to force England to a peace. Napoleon agreed to accept Alexander as mediator between France and England. If England should reject his mediation, the Emperor of Russia was to make common cause with France; while Denmark, Sweden, Portugal, and Austria were to be summoned to close their ports to British commerce and to make war upon England. If the Swedish Government should refuse, Denmark was to be called upon to commence hostilities against Sweden.

To Bernadotte Napoleon wrote in July :—

“ THE EMPEROR TO MARSHAL BERNADOTTE.

“ If England refuses to accept the Russian mediation, Denmark must declare war against her, or I must declare war against Denmark. In the latter event your duty will be to seize the whole Danish Continent. You must make a great fuss about Denmark having opened the passage of the Sound, and having allowed their seas to be invaded which to the Danes ought to be as inviolable as their territory itself.

“ NAPOLEON.”¹

Napoleon alludes in this letter to the British Expedition which had recently entered the Baltic under the command of Cathcart. It had threatened Stralsund, but had been recalled without accomplishing anything except making it clear that the English fleet held the keys of the Baltic. Bernadotte, who appears to have realised very clearly where the danger lay, wrote without delay to Napoleon, advising him to seize Copenhagen and to close the Sound. If the advice had been taken, Canning's coming *coup* might have been check-mated; but Napoleon hesitated, and the month of August was allowed to pass.

¹ Bingham's *Letters*, ii. 326.



MARSHAL BERNADOTTE
Prince of Ponte Corvo
Governor of the Hanseatic Towns 1808

Meanwhile the English Government had been informed by their agent at Hamburg that Bernadotte had told Bourrienne, the French Minister at Hamburg, that the Emperor had agreed to force England to a peace. They had also become aware of the purport of the secret clauses of the Tilsit Treaty and were not disposed to await their development.¹ England had lost William Pitt; but, under his mantle, which had descended to Canning, a heart was beating that was as dauntless as the Great Commoner's. Canning, as soon as he grasped the situation, did not hesitate to form and to execute a bold resolve. He determined to frustrate the French and Russian designs upon Denmark by bombarding Copenhagen and by seizing the Danish fleet. The bombardment commenced on the 2nd September, and on the 7th the Danish fleet surrendered, with the result that the secret clauses of the Treaty of Tilsit were at one blow rendered nugatory and of no avail. England, as Vandal puts it, "had broken, before he had time to seize it, the weapon which Napoleon was about to make his own." In other words, before he had time to bite, the would-be biter was bit.

The surrender of Copenhagen led to a six weeks occupation of Denmark by the British. The Danes were now driven into the arms of Napoleon; and the King of Denmark sent Count Bernstoff to Marshal Bernadotte at Hamburg to seek the assistance of France in the event of the British prolonging their stay beyond six weeks.² After receiving Count Bernstoff, Bernadotte did not fail to come to the conclusion that Denmark had no less aversion to a French than to a British occupation. He informed the Emperor of the purport of Bernstoff's mission, which resulted in a Treaty, concluded at Fontainebleau on 31st October. The Treaty of Fontainebleau contemplated an occupation of Denmark

¹ F. O. 35/38 (Hamburg. Thornton's Despatch, No. 72, 25th July 1807).

² F. O. 73/44 (Sweden).

by Bernadotte. But, although the Copenhagen episode had thrown him into transports of rage, Napoleon took no immediate action. He was occupied with his Kingdom of Italy, where he spent the last six weeks of 1807, and it was not until his return to Paris in January 1808 that he began to take up seriously the thread of affairs in Northern Europe.¹

In the course of February 1808 the Russians entered Finland, and Napoleon became bound by his promise to undertake the invasion of Sweden. Bernadotte was entrusted with the command of the invading army of 23,000 men. In the despatches, which Berthier transmitted to him in the month of March, we see Napoleon's attitude of mind reflected. On 1st March Bernadotte was ordered to "expedite his march," but on 23rd March he was directed not to embark unless the Danes should furnish 13,000 men. "His Majesty," wrote Berthier, "does not take such an interest in this expedition, as to risk it with less than 36,000 men." It is evident that, as time went on, Napoleon became more and more irresolute and half-hearted about an expedition which he had undertaken for the profit and advantage of Russia rather than of France.

¹ *Cambridge Modern History*, ix. 300; F. O. State Papers, 23/39. (Letter from an American at Hamburg to his brother at New York, 25th September 1807).

CHAPTER XXX¹

A SPANISH ARMY IN DENMARK

JANUARY—OCTOBER 1808

"The Marquis de la Romana, abusing the confidence of the Prince of Ponte Corvo ; . . has embarked his troops upon English ships."—*The Spanish envoys in Paris to King Joseph Bonaparte, August 1808.*²

THE most picturesque element in the Hanseatic Governor's motley army was a Spanish contingent which Napoleon had commandeered under a forgotten clause of an old Franco-Spanish treaty. In obedience to his mandate 14,000 Spanish soldiers had been transported to North Germany, and had been placed under Bernadotte's command. The relations between the French Marshal and his Spanish troops quickly became smooth and cordial. They were well-behaved soldiers, who appreciated the comfortable quarters and excellent fare which they enjoyed in the North, and had no objection to the strict discipline which Bernadotte always insisted upon. They were astonished when they learned that, fifteen years back, their new chief had been a ranker like themselves and was now a Marshal and a Prince ; and they became attracted to him when they recognised the Moorish strain in his ancestry by a glance at his dark complexion and black hair and eyes. Born and bred within sight of the Pyrenees, he spoke their language and resembled them in appearance. "The General is one of ourselves," they exclaimed on the

¹ Special use has been made in this Chapter of *Les Espagnoles de la Grand Armée (Le Corps de la Romana)*, par Commandant P. Boppé, Paris, 1899.

² *Roi Joseph*, iv. 432-433.

occasion of his first inspection.¹ He responded by making a point of always including several Spanish companies in his personal Guard of Honour.

The Spanish Commandant, the Marquis de la Romana, was a Castilian, who declared everywhere that he was a sincere admirer of the genius and glory of the Emperor Napoleon, and that he was "proud to serve under the noble Prince of Ponte Corvo," whom he claimed as almost a fellow countryman. He and his soldiers remained loyal to their French Commander until they were affected by the tremor of a change of dynasty which shook ancient Spain to its foundations and made its influence felt even in the Isles of Denmark.

On the 18th of March 1808 took place the Revolution of Aranjuez, which was followed by the abdication of King Charles IV in favour of his son, Ferdinand. Napoleon, who had for a long time cherished the wish that one of his family should replace the Bourbon dynasty on the throne of Spain, proceeded to exploit for this purpose the quarrels between the old King and his son. The scene of this stupendous intrigue was the French town of Bayonne, near the Spanish border; and Napoleon lived to call it his "tragedy of Bayonne," and to admit that it destroyed him.²

We find the Spanish situation reflected in the following despatch from Bayonne, dated 29th March:—

"MARSHAL BERTHIER TO MARSHAL BERNADOTTE.

"PRINCE,—The Emperor directs me to send a courier to you as the bearer of a copy of the *Moniteur* of to-day. The Emperor's orders are that you should keep the news secret as long as possible. You will consult the Spanish Commandant, and you will take every possible precaution to prevent a bad effect being produced upon the troops. Doubtless the hatred, which all Spaniards feel for the Prince of the Peace, will render the news agreeable. But, as it is said that a party is being

¹ Boppé, 147.

² *Cambridge Modern History*, 433-434.

organised in favour of the King, Charles IV, who has been forced to resign his crown, and that it is possible that the Prince of the Asturias (Ferdinand) may soon be forced to resign also, it is necessary to keep the events as long as possible from the troops." ¹

While Napoleon was manœuvring to secure the abdication of the King and the renunciation of Prince Ferdinand's rights, he was busy in selecting a successor. His first choice was his brother Louis, who refused the offer. His second string was his brother Joseph; but Joseph was by no means eager to exchange the crown of Naples for that of Spain. Failing Joseph and Louis, Napoleon appears to have held in reserve Murat and Bernadotte.

This was how it came about that at this period, when he was offering the vacant crown to his brother, the Emperor employed an emissary to sound Bernadotte, who was told that it was possible he might receive the command of the French armies in Spain, with the prospect of becoming King of Spain and of the Balearic Isles. Bernadotte told Madame de Stael that he had given an evasive reply to the effect that "he had no wish to be King of the Balearic Isles, and that Napoleon could not make him King of Spain; but that, if ordered to command the armies in Spain, it would be his duty to obey." He added that "if he should ever be placed on a foreign throne he would become a Spaniard, or a Pole, or a Dutchman, as the case might be, and that he would never consent to reign with a knife held to his throat."

Louis Bonaparte having refused the Emperor's offer, Joseph reluctantly accepted it, with the result that Bernadotte found himself in a strange situation. He was in command of 14,000 Spanish troops; and it now became his duty to require them to swear allegiance

¹ Lafosse, ii. 41-42.

to his brother-in-law, who had been recently known as Citizen Joseph Bonaparte, and was now the King of Spain.

The news of the Spanish Revolution was broken so gently to the Spaniards in Denmark that they failed at the first blush to appreciate its significance, or to grasp its real meaning, and were disposed to accept the suggestion that the abdication of the Spanish King had been voluntary, and to place a favourable construction upon Napoleon's action in placing his brother on the throne.

The Marquis de la Romana wrote to King Joseph on 14th June from the Island of Funen, offering him on behalf of his division the homage of their "entire submission" and of their "inviolable attachment"¹; and on 17th June, he wrote to Bernadotte assuring him that he was prepared to recognise the new King, and that he was convinced of the advantages which Spain would derive from the new constitution.

The truth about the Spanish embroglio was bound to reach the Danish Islands sooner or later, by land or by sea. The Admiral commanding the British Fleet in the Baltic found opportunities of establishing relations with the Spaniards. A Scottish priest, Father James Robertson, was landed, who informed them of the real course of events and of the true state of feeling in Spain; and Canning commissioned his friend, Evan Mann, to visit the Spanish officers and to stimulate them to revolt. These seeds were sown on fruitful ground. When the troops were required in August to recognise the new dynasty, two Spanish regiments, stationed near Copenhagen, refused to take the oath and broke into open mutiny. One French officer was killed, and others were compelled to find safety in flight. Several of the Danish Islands were the scenes of similar outbreaks. The British Admiral succeeded in embarking *La Romana* and 9,000 of his troops, and carried them off to Spain.

¹ *Roi Joseph*, iv. 334.

Bernadotte forthwith made a rapid journey by land and water to the Island of Funen, and arrived in time to prevent the embarkation of the men of the regiment of Algarve, whose Colonel proclaimed himself responsible for their revolt, and created a painful sensation by shooting himself in the presence of his troops. He was a French *émigré* named Lacoste, who had assumed the Spanish name of Acosta.¹ The French Marshal endeavoured to conciliate the remnant of 6,000 Spanish troops by the issue of high-flown proclamations; but, before he could make his influence felt, Napoleon ordered all the Spaniards that remained in Denmark to be sent to France as prisoners.²

The news of the defection of La Romana and of his troops was conveyed to King Joseph Bonaparte by his representatives in Paris, MM. Azanza and Urquigo, in the following letter, dated 20th August :

"SIRE,—To-day at the *levée* the Emperor gave us news which caused us surprise and pain. The Marquis de la Romana, abusing the confidence of the Prince of Ponte Corvo, and forgetful of his solemn oath of fidelity and obedience to Your Majesty, has embarked his troops upon English ships, and has left the island of Funen, taking with him a Spanish regiment. This unexpected event will oblige His Imperial Majesty to order the rest of the auxiliary force to be disarmed, so as to prevent them from following the example given by the General." ³

Although this incident exposed Bernadotte to criticism,⁴ it did not seriously affect his position. The official view was that the Spaniards had been guilty of an abuse of confidence. A few weeks afterwards, in October, the Emperor divided all his troops in Germany into two commands, placing one under Marshal Davout,

¹ Boppé, 66; *Roi Joseph*, iv. 478, 479.

² Boppé, 54, 55, n. Acosta's tragical death made the groundwork of the plot of a pathetic play from the pen of Prosper Mérimée.

³ *Roi Joseph*, iv. 432, 433.

⁴ *Lettres Inédites de Nap.*, i, 236.

and the other under Marshal Bernadotte, to whom at the same time he conveyed the expression of his personal confidence. On 27th October he wrote: "If circumstances enable me to prove my esteem for you, you may be sure that I shall do so with pleasure."¹

The following extract from a letter, which is preserved among the State Papers of our Foreign Office, affords evidence that Napoleon was credited in Prussian diplomatic circles with the intention of incorporating Denmark in his empire, under the sovereignty or the governorship of Bernadotte: "The French . . . have so little consideration for the interests of Denmark, that it is not doubted that they have in view one day to annex her continental possessions, and even the islands, more closely with her own territory, probably under the Prince of Ponte Corvo."²

The project of invading Sweden was abandoned, and the Danish Expedition gradually resolved itself into a military occupation of Denmark, which placed a heavy burden upon the inhabitants, and upon the resources of the State. The fact that the Prince of Ponte Corvo was placed in supreme command of the troops in Denmark caused some chagrin to the Danish King and Prince Royal. Nevertheless, the French Marshal seems, as time went on, to have got on well both with the Court and with the people. He was the first, and for several years, the only, Frenchman who received from the Danish King the Order of the Elephant,³ and he left behind him a good reputation in the provinces which he occupied.

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, 14417.

² F. O. 73/52,. (Prussia) 64/79 (letter dated Königsburg, 21st August 1808, signed Alex. Gibsone Junior).

³ *Almanach Impérial* for 1809 and following years.

CHAPTER XXXI

BERNADOTTE'S GOVERNMENT OF THE HANSEATIC TOWNS—HIS FEUD WITH DAVOUT

JULY 1807—MARCH 1809

"He (Bernadotte) was appointed Governor of the Hanseatic Towns, and had to deal with Sweden. He behaved with so much moderation, justice, and skill as to win the affection of those countries."—GENERAL ZURLINDEN, *Napoléon et ses Maréchaux*, ii. 65.

ONE of the most competent historians of the Napoleonic period, who made a special study of the relations of the First Empire with Germany, declares that the inhabitants of the Hanseatic cities "gave more praise to Bernadotte than to any of the other generals of Napoleon."¹ Bourrienne, who was French Minister at Hamburg, said that by the favourable impression which he left behind him in that city he unconsciously paved his way to the Swedish throne. "Nobody," writes a rather unprejudiced biographer, "possessed in such a high degree as Bernadotte the talent for creating order out of disorder, for giving dignity to coercion, for winning the gratitude of the peoples of whom he was appointed the oppressor."²

His popularity at Hamburg was enhanced by the contrast which was exhibited when one of his subordinates acted as his deputy during the Danish Campaign. This was General Dupas, whose maladministration culminated in an *émeute*, and in the necessity for the establishment of martial law. In reply to an appeal from Bourrienne for the suppression of Dupas' "Star Chamber," Bernadotte writing from Denmark, set

¹ Rambaud, *L'Allemagne sous Napoléon*, 447, 453.

² Sarrans, i. 110.

matters right in a measured letter, from which some characteristic passages deserve to be quoted:—

MARSHAL BERNADOTTE TO M. BOURRIENNE.

"I have received your letter, my dear Minister. It conveys in forcible language the expression of your right feeling, which revolts against oppression, severity, and the abuse of power. I entirely concur in your view of the subject, and I am distressed whenever I see such acts of injustice committed. . . . On the other hand, did not the people give way to turbulence and insubordination? Were they not to blame for throwing stones at the guard, for forcing the palisades, and for refusing to obey their magistrates? It is melancholy that they should have fallen into these excesses, from which they would have refrained if they had listened to the civil chiefs, who are their proper directors. . . . Whenever an irritated mob resorts to violence there is no safety for anyone. The governing authority must then leave nothing undone to stop mischief. The Senate of Ancient Rome, although so jealous of its prerogatives, assigned in times of trouble the power of life and death to a Dictator, who recognised no code except his own will and the axe of his lictors. The ordinary laws did not resume their course until the people returned to submission. These unfortunate events have produced a disturbed feeling in Hamburg, of which evil-disposed persons might take advantage to stir up open insurrection. That feeling could only be repressed by a severe tribunal, which, however, is no longer necessary. General Dupas has, accordingly, received orders to dissolve it, and justice will resume its usual course.

"J. BERNADOTTE."¹

An example of the Marshal's method of tempering coercion with generosity was afforded by the case of a local pedagogue at Hamburg, a French *émigré* named De Bonald, who had published a grammar in which occurred the following sentence, as an example of syntax: "They call Bonaparte a great general; but

¹ *Mémoires de Bourrienne* vii. 217.

he is only a successful brigand." All went well with the schoolmaster and with his syntax, until Bonaparte became Emperor of the French, and conqueror of North Germany. Upon the occurrence of that event, the schoolmaster thought that the time had arrived for correcting his syntax, which he did by taking a name similar in lettering, and substituting the name of Bernadotte for that of Bonaparte. When Bernadotte became Governor of the Hanseatic towns, the unfortunate schoolmaster began to realise how small a place is the world, and how dangerous it may be for a grammarian to sprinkle his educational text-books with personalities about public men. When the new Governor found that the youth of Hamburg was being taught to believe that he was no better than "a successful brigand," he was forced to take notice of a reflection upon the Emperor's representative. The schoolmaster was summoned, and was severely reprimanded. All copies of the grammar were called in and destroyed. When, however, Bernadotte ascertained that the schoolmaster was in needy circumstances, he paid him the full price for all the books. De Bonald was quickly reconciled to Bernadottian "brigandage," and he and his friends became warm supporters of the French Governor.¹

Another incident affords an illustration of Bernadotte's Gascon dexterity. The house which the Senate of Hamburg assigned for the residence of the Governor was a dilapidated old mansion, shabbily furnished and in bad repair. Bernadotte made no protest, but bided his time. A Senator was commissioned by his colleagues to petition the Governor for the release of the Director of the principal theatre from an imprisonment which he had incurred for disrespectful conduct towards the Governor; and the Senator in discharging his duty declared that until his petition was granted, he would not leave the Governor's palace, even if he had to

¹ Lafosse, ii. 22-29.

remain there for a week. Bernadotte saw his opportunity. He courteously expressed a hope that the Senator would remain a fortnight instead of a week, and requested him to select his apartments so as to enable them to be suitably furnished. " This house," said the Prince of Ponte Corvo, " is of course quite good enough for a mere soldier such as I am, accustomed to sleep in camps and to bivouac on battlefields, but I could not for an instant allow a Senator of Hamburg to be so poorly housed." The shot took effect; and the Senate proceeded to furnish the Governor's Palace so luxuriously as to afford him an opportunity of politely intervening to curb their extravagance. The incident of the imprisonment of the Director of the theatre is mentioned in our Foreign Office Records, from which we learn that his name was Eulé, and that he only remained in custody for twenty-four hours.¹

Bernadotte's tact and popularity were turned to good profit by the Emperor, who in February 1808 called for 3,000 sailors to be raised in the Hanseatic Towns—2,000 in Hamburg, 500 in Bremen, and 500 in Lübeck. Bourrienne, the Emperor's Diplomatic Representative, was appalled at the receipt of the order. Bernadotte smiled, and said: " Leave it to me," The success of this levy, which produced nearly the whole required number, astonished everyone.²

It was at this time that the Emperor paid a special compliment to the Marshal's wife, Désirée. The Emperor of Russia had sent to Napoleon three priceless fur-pelisses. He kept one of them for his own use, and gave the others as presents to his sister Pauline and to the Princess of Ponte Corvo respectively.

In 1808 Napoleon divided the command of his armies in Germany between Marshals Bernadotte and Davout. It is possible that he placed these two Marshals in juxtaposition, because he knew very well that there was no

¹ F. O. 33/38 (Hamburg).

² Lafosse, 2, 21.

danger that they would ever unite in any intrigue against himself. The asperity of their relations with each other is evidenced by the following passage which occurs in a letter of an officer who was serving under Davout: " Marshal Davout had some great qualities, but he made himself hated everywhere by the trouble he created (*ses tracasseries*) by his inquisitorial police methods and by his bad manners. I remember an occasion at Hamburg, whither I had been sent by Marshal Davout, when Bernadotte, indignant at Davout having opened the letters which he received from Paris, said to me: ' Tell your Marshal that I shall strike him across the face with a horsewhip the first time I meet him.' " ¹ Davout spoke no less severely when in later years he applauded his youngest daughter, Léonie, for expressing the opinion that Bernadotte deserved to be hanged.²

A serious difference arose between the two Marshals when Davout blamed Bernadotte for the manner in which he had carried out the search of the house of the Prince of Sayn-Wittgenstein, a resident in Hamburg, who was suspected of treasonable intrigues, and especially for having warned the Prince of the nature of the accusation which had been made against him. Bernadotte took the opportunity of writing a sarcastic letter, the sting of which lies in the italicised passages:—

MARSHAL BERNADOTTE TO MARSHAL DAVOUT.

" As regards the complaints which your Excellency prefers against the persons who searched the papers of the Prince of Sayn-Wittgenstein, I feel bound to inform you that they are persons who enjoy the confidence of His Majesty the Emperor and King. They are M. Bourrienne, His Majesty's Minister, and Colonel Gerard. It was in obedience to instructions from me that they informed the Prince of Sayn-Wittgenstein of the charge

¹ Extract from a letter from General de Cubieres dated 22nd December 1853—*Souvenirs de Baron A. du Cassa* (A.D.C. to King Jerome Bonaparte), 97, 98.

² *Le Maréchal Davout* par Emile Montégut, 247.

which has been made against him. *I am ignorant whether this is customary in police operations:* but I consider that in ordering a domiciliary visit to the house of a man of high rank and holding a public office, I should present an example of French fair-play, and act with the dignity which should characterise every proceeding which is carried out in the name of our august Sovereign. The Emperor has been informed that the Prince was made aware of the charges which had been made against him, and I am glad to think that my zeal and devotion for His Majesty's service have not been at fault in that respect. I have the honour to be, Duke, your very humble and obedient Servant,

BERNADOTTE.

"P.S.—I deem it my duty to let you know that among the papers, found at the Prince of Wittgenstein's, and forwarded to His Majesty, *was a letter from the Princess Augusta of Prussia, praising you enthusiastically for, amongst other things, accelerating the evacuation of Prussia by our French troops.*"¹

Bernadotte was at Hamburg when he received the news of his mother's death, which took place at Pau in February 1809. The following is the letter, dated "Hamburg, 16th February," which he wrote to his brother :—

"MY DEAR BROTHER,—I have received with profound grief the news of the loss which we have sustained by the death of our beloved and revered mother. I was so little prepared for this sad event that I was cherishing the hope of soon being able to pay a visit to Pau for the purpose of seeing her, and of folding her in my arms. Providence has decided otherwise, and we must submit to its decrees, although the pain caused by such a great and sudden loss is cruel indeed. I thank you, my dear brother, for your consolatory words. I appreciate their sincerity, and I receive them with gratefulness. Farewell, my dear brother. Preserve your health for the sake of your wife and children, and believe me that I am as inseparably bound to you as to . . . Your brother,

J. BERNADOTTE.

¹ *Davout*, par de Bloqueville, ii, 420.

"P.S.—I beg of you to convey to the magisterial body and to the public officers of Pau my grateful recognition of the touching proof of their attachment which they have displayed towards me on the occasion of this sad event."¹

Less than thirty years had elapsed since the day when Bernadotte, as a lad, ran away from his mother's and brother's home, and had his passport viséd by the Mayor of a neighbouring municipality, so as to avoid discovery at the hands of the "magisterial body" and of the "public officers" who were now so eager to offer him a proof of their attachment.²

Bourrienne tells us that on one occasion he questioned Bernadotte about his absence from Jena, and told him that it had been reported that Napoleon had been heard to say that "if he had sent Bernadotte before a court-martial, he would have been shot." He adds that Bernadotte said: "I believe him quite capable of such an intention. He hates me because he knows I do not like him. But if he says anything to me on the subject, I shall answer him. I am a Gascon, but he is even more so. I may have been piqued at receiving what looked like orders from Davout. But I did my duty."³ It was unfortunate that it was Davout who was thrown with Bernadotte on that occasion. With Ney or Lannes or Murat the element of personal rancour and personal misunderstanding would have been absent from that episode.

¹ Wrangel, 30, 31. ² Bernadotte, *The First Phase*, chap. ii.

³ Bourrienne, vii. 161, 162; *vide supra*, 139-144.

CHAPTER XXXII

BERNADOTTE COMPLAINS OF A HIDDEN HAND, AND OBJECTS TO COMMANDING SAXONS

APRIL 1809

"The treatment which I receive affects my *morals* very severely, and exhausts all the energies of my soul. . . All this, Sire, makes me tremble for the success of my operations; when I see my efforts perpetually paralysed by a hidden force over which I cannot prevail."
—*Bernadotte to Napoleon, April 1809.*

"I have already had the honour of entreating your Majesty to relieve me of the command of the Saxons."—*Ib.*

In March 1809 Bernadotte was ordered to repair to Dresden to await commands for the next campaign. It was at Dresden that he received news of the revolution in Sweden which had resulted in the expulsion of King Gustavus IV, and in the election of his uncle, the Duke of Sudermania, as Regent. The newly elected Regent lost no time in sending an envoy to Napoleon asking for his countenance and advice, and a courier to Marshal Bernadotte as Commander-in-Chief in North Germany requesting a suspension of arms. The person who was selected as courier on this occasion was a Major de la Grange, who had been one of Bernadotte's Swedish prisoners at Lübeck in 1806. Bernadotte, wrote the British Minister at Stockholm, "gave him a most favourable and flattering reception,"¹ granted a suspension of arms, and wrote a letter to the Swedish Field Marshal Klingspar, which was full of compliments for the "brave and generous Swedish nation." Napoleon adopted Bernadotte's action without any protests,² but afterwards blamed him for this armistice. There was

¹ F. O. (Sweden), 73/55 (Merry's Despatch, No. 54).

² *Corr. de Nap.*, 15032.

a suspicion that Bernadotte was coquetting with his future subjects; but it is improbable that, at this date, he had any notion of becoming King of Sweden. It is true that he sometimes dreamt of thrones and sceptres, and that it was at Hamburg that he told Bourrienne the story of the Parisian fortune-teller's prophecy that he would cross the sea to become a king.¹ But this was a favourite anecdote of his, and he could hardly have foreseen the chain of circumstances that afterwards raised him to the Swedish throne.

During Bernadotte's administration of Hanover, Napoleon had been pursuing the fatal path which was to lead him, after a quick succession of spasmodic victories, to an ultimate and inevitable disaster. Let us span these twenty months in a few sentences. In the summer of 1807 the Emperor had reached the zenith of his glory and of his power, when at Tilsit he divided the mastery of the greater part of Europe between himself and the Czar of Russia. Thence dates his decline. When he next met the Czar in 1808 at Erfurt, his position had been weakened by the Peninsular War which had been the outcome of his unscrupulous Spanish adventure. "That cursed war destroyed me," he afterwards declared; "it divided my forces, opened a wing to the English soldiers, and attacked my moral standing in Europe."

The blunder of Bayonne brought its speedy retribution. Within a few weeks Napoleon was staggered by the news of the capitulation of General Dupont (the same Dupont who had so signally distinguished himself at Halle and in Poland under Bernadotte) with nearly 20,000 men at Baylen. This crushing disaster dealt a serious blow at the Emperor's prestige, and afforded encouragement to all his enemies. In particular it revived Austria's latent resolve to avenge Austerlitz, and stimulated her to prepare for war.

¹ *L'Histoire Générale*, p. 71.

! Napoleon now began to feel the pinch of adversity. His presence was becoming necessary everywhere. Whenever he left the seat of war, the tide turned against his armies. Whenever he left his capital for the seat of war, Fouché began to count upon his fall, and, at the news of every reverse, to fix upon Murat or Bernadotte as his successor.¹ Napoleon did his best to avert hostilities at such a disadvantageous moment; but Austria saw her opportunity, and, without any formal declaration, invaded Bavaria on 10th April 1809. The Austrians entered with confidence and determination upon a campaign which has been well described as "the starting point of the popular reaction against the despotism of Napoleon."²

It was at this juncture that Bernadotte found himself at Dresden, where he remained for a fortnight without receiving any orders or any communication from Headquarters. It would appear probable that he had been forgotten or overlooked, not for the first time, by the Chief of the Staff. He was aware that he was designated for the command of the Saxon contingent, and had strenuously protested against being relegated to the command of foreign troops; but he received no further information until 11th April, when a despatch reached him from Marshal Berthier reproaching him with not having sent a detailed report on the Polish Army, and the French troops in Hanover. This despatch elicited from him a direct protest to the Emperor, contained in a letter which, from a biographical point of view, is one of the most important of all those which have been preserved. It contains strong evidence that at this period he believed himself to be the victim of injustice and malevolence, and it prepares us for the events which, three months afterwards, involved him in one of the many interludes of disgrace which dotted his career.

¹ Sorel, vii. 336; Pelet, i. 100. ² *Cambridge Modern History*, ix. 341.

MARSHAL BERNADOTTE TO THE EMPEROR.

"DRESDEN, 11th April, 1809.

"SIRE,—To-day, 11th April, I have received from Headquarters the first despatches that have reached me since my arrival at Dresden. . . . The Major General (Berthier) complains of not having yet received from me a report on the situation of the Polish Army, General Dupas' Division, and General Bruyère's brigade. I have the honour to represent to Your Majesty, that the message informs me for the first time that the Polish Army and the French troops in Hanover form part of the new command which Your Majesty has assigned to me when summoning me to Dresden. It was all the more impossible for me to divine Your Majesty's intention, since I learnt yesterday by chance that General Dupas' division has left Hanover in obedience to an order coming directly from the Major General. I say nothing of the distance which separates me from these corps.

"I have already had the honour of entreating Your Majesty to relieve me of the command of the Saxons. I have already explained to Your Majesty that I feel unequal to the task of leading foreigners. I eagerly await Your Majesty's kind assent to my prayer; for the treatment which I experience every day affects my *morale* very sensibly, and exhausts all the energies of my soul (*Affectant mon moral de la manière la plus sensible, achève d'épuiser les forces que je trouve encore dans mon âme.*) I came to Dresden without having received any instructions. The first letter containing orders, which by the hazards of war might have been of the utmost importance, has been sent to me by post and reaches me within sixteen days. All this, Sire, makes me tremble for the success of my operations; when I see my efforts perpetually paralysed by a hidden force over which I cannot prevail. (*Continuellement paralyés par une force cachée, dont il me serait trop difficile de triompher.*) I implore Your Majesty to grant me my retirement, unless you will deign to employ me in some distant expedition, where my enemies would no longer be interested in persecuting me.

"J. B. BERNADOTTE, Prince of Ponte Corvo."¹

¹ Lafosse, ii. 65; Pingaud, 85.

Bernadotte followed up this very human document with similar letters written on 12th April and 15th April, appealing to the Emperor to relieve him of the Saxon Command, or to allow him to retire from the service.

Napoleon took no notice of Bernadotte's first letters, but on the 19th April he wrote the following reply from Ingoldstadt, in which he stimulated the ambitious Gascon by hinting vaguely at some great promotion :—

THE EMPEROR TO MARSHAL BERNADOTTE.

“MY COUSIN,—I have received all your letters. In the war upon which I am entering, I am supported by Russia, and you are marked out for something in that combination (*et vous êtes entré pour quelque chose dans cette combinaison*). Accordingly you will receive the command which I have assigned to you as a mark of my esteem and regard. . . . NAPOLEON.”¹

It will be observed that Napoleon takes no notice of Bernadotte's complaints against Berthier for leaving him without orders, or of his request to be relieved of the Saxon Command. As a matter of fact, it appears from the Emperor's instructions to Berthier, dated the 30th March 1809, that Napoleon intended, if Marshal Lannes should not be able to come to Germany from Spain, to give Bernadotte the command of the Second Army Corps, which was the crack corps of the Army, and was to be its vanguard. His directions to Berthier were: “The Second Corps under the command of the Duke of Montebello (Lannes) or of the Prince of Ponte Corvo (Bernadotte) shall be composed as follows,” and then he details its composition.² Bernadotte would have been delighted to command the Second Corps. How true it is that “no man ever knows his luck!” If Bernadotte had got his wish he would probably have fallen, as Lannes did, at the head of the Second Corps.

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, 15093. ² *Corr. de Nap.*, 14975; Pelet, ii. 353, 359.

The Emperor's constant habit of placing Bernadotte in command of foreign rather than French contingents -- is alluded to by the author of a work on the Marshals of Napoleon, who observes that "Napoleon always took care that Bernadotte should never have under his command French soldiers. His troops in 1805 were Bavarians, in 1807 Poles, in 1808 mixed Dutch and Spaniards, and in 1809 Poles and Saxons. Berthier, working out the Emperor's ideas, and himself also hating Bernadotte, took care that in the allotment of duties the disagreeable and unimportant task should fall to the Marshal."¹

It is obvious that Napoleon sometimes felt uneasy about Bernadotte's popularity and influence with the rank and file of the French Army. Yet there is reliable evidence that there were times at which he contemplated selecting Bernadotte as his own successor. In fact the Emperor's attitude of mind towards Bernadotte at this period was variable and indeterminate. Talking to Count Roederer in March 1809, in the course of a conversation which that personage recorded verbatim soon after it occurred, he said, in reference to King Joseph, who was giving him trouble: "If necessary I shall adopt a General for the purpose of sending him to Spain. I shall adopt Bernadotte, just as I have already adopted Murat." A few minutes afterwards, in reference to the succession to his own throne, he added: "I have no need of my family. . . . I shall adopt a son, a General Bernadotte. I have already adopted Murat. Nothing shall stop my destinies."² It is strange that, when Napoleon's thoughts wandered only side his own family, they fixed on Bernadotte as next in the running for a throne—even for his own.

¹ Dunn-Pattison *Napoleon's Marshals*, 80.

² Roederer, 245, 251.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE CAMPAIGN OF 1809—BERNADOTTE'S PROTESTS AND WARNINGS ABOUT HIS SAXON TROOPS

APRIL—JUNE 1809

"The Saxons are, I repeat, quite incompetent to act as an independent corps. . . . I repeat that with the Saxons I can undertake nothing."
—*Bernadotte to Berthier, 28th May 1809.*

NAPOLEON was now entering upon a campaign more hazardous than any upon which he had been engaged since the institution of the Empire. His daring and promptitude kept pace with the risks which he had to face. Leaving Paris on 13th April, he was on the banks of the Danube on the 17th; and, having massed his scattered forces, he struck a series of rapid blows culminating in the decisive victory of Eckmühl, which was quickly followed by the storming and occupation of Ratisbon. The capture of Ratisbon opened the way to Vienna, which he entered on 12th May. In the month which had passed since he left Paris he had taken 100 cannon, 50,000 prisoners, forty standards, and the enemy's capital.¹

From Ratisbon Napoleon summoned Bernadotte from Dresden. It was announced that he was to march through Bohemia, and he started in that direction. But this was a ruse to draw the Austrians away from the Emperor's path; and it was completely successful. An Austrian army was detached to defend Bohemia from invasion. When this purpose had been accomplished Bernadotte turned aside from the Bohemian frontier, gave the Austrians the slip, and made a rapid

¹ Pelet, i. 294-311; ii. 150-151.

countermarch which enabled him to reach the depot of the Grand Army on the Danube on the same day that Napoleon entered Vienna. In his next bulletin Napoleon referred to these operations as one of the "skilful manœuvres" which had "reduced Vienna to submission" and had "completed the defeat of the enemy."¹

Bernadotte reached the Danube just in time to save General Vandamme from being overwhelmed by 30,000 Austrians at the Bridge of Linz. The Austrians were repulsed with heavy loss. Vandamme, who now became Bernadotte's principal lieutenant, was as remarkable for his bravery, tenacity, and vigour, as he was for the roughness and violence of his temper.

With Vandamme Bernadotte had the success which nearly always characterised his relations with his subordinates. Vandamme, who was unmanageable by other Marshals, "fed out of Bernadotte's hand." In his memoirs we read that he was delighted to hear of the approach of the Prince of Ponte Corvo, who was one of his oldest and best friends. Vandamme's ambition was to obtain a Marshal's Baton, and Bernadotte was one of his backers. Writing on 21st May to Napoleon, Bernadotte described him as "the only general capable of replacing me if I should be killed or wounded," and a few weeks afterwards we find him writing to Vandamme from Vienna: "I had an opportunity of speaking of you to the Emperor, as we arranged that I should do; and it gives me great pleasure to tell you that he seemed very well disposed towards you."²

Bernadotte now received orders to create a fresh diversion by invading Bohemia, but was prevented carrying them out by the sudden disaster which overtook the Grand Army on 21st and 22nd May at Essling and Aspern. The losses in killed and wounded were terrible, and included the sacrifice of the life of the heroic Marshal Lannes. This staggering blow caused

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, 15239.

² *Vandamme*, par Du Casse, ii. 295, 311.

a change in the Emperor's plans. The invasion of Bohemia was abandoned, and orders were sent to Bernadotte to guard the bridges, to keep the enemy occupied by frequent incursions in every direction, and to hold himself in readiness for a summons to Vienna.

The unexpected check, which Napoleon had just suffered, gave rise, in the army and in Paris, to serious apprehensions for the safety of the imperial throne. It was said that an emissary carried the news from the Danube to Fouché and warned him that the condition of the Army was desperate, and that he should hold himself ready for eventualities. Gossip named the Prince of Ponte Corvo as the sender of this messenger¹; but there does not appear to be any foundation for the tale. Rumours that Fouché was "designating Prince Bernadotte for the imperial crown"² were current; but, although Bernadotte was always an ambitious dreamer, there is no evidence that he made any move.

There was at this time a growing body of opinion, which was alarmed at Napoleon's ambition but had no sympathy with either royalists or foreigners. Many people were looking for some military head of the State who would preserve the fruits of the Revolution without risking them in a career of perpetual war and conquest. The only names that found favour were those of Murat, Bernadotte, and Masséna. Masséna had no political ambition. As public opinion turned from time to time towards Murat or Bernadotte, Fouché's thoughts veered with the wind.³

Napoleon's fortunes seemed to be at their lowest ebb. But he never lost courage, and the tide soon turned. Before a week had passed he was able to send good news in the following letter, dated 27th May:—

THE EMPEROR TO MARSHAL BERNADOTTE.

"MY COUSIN,—I send you this letter by the hand of the page whom I am sending to the Empress, to

¹ Sorel, vii. 357-358. ² Pelet, iv. 19. ³ Pelet, i. 991; iv. 13 n., 19 n.



GENERAL COUNT RAPP



GENERAL COUNT VANDAMME

announce to you the approach of the Viceroy (Eugène Beauharnais) and of my army of Italy. . . . I estimate the reinforcements from Italy at 60,000—and my army of Dalmatia has arrived at Laybach.

"NAPOLEON."¹

Napoleon now began concentrating the Grand Army for a great battle. Bernadotte's corps was summoned from Linz, and the Marshal himself was invited to pay a personal visit to the Emperor at Vienna. Baron Peyrusse, the Treasurer-General, arrived there on the 10th June with funds for the army, and tells us in his memoirs that he found Bernadotte staying at the Palace.²

As we are now approaching the second of the two debatable incidents in Bernadotte's military career,³ turning on the behaviour of his Saxon troops at the battle of Wagram, and of his attitude towards them, it is the right time to refer to the composition of his corps. His only French troops were five infantry battalions. The remainder consisted of seventeen battalions of Saxon infantry, twenty squadrons of Saxon cavalry, and five batteries of Saxon artillery.

These Saxons were not lacking in valour, but were deficient in point of discipline and of experience. Reference was made in the preceding chapter to Bernadotte's repeated complaints on the subject down to 19th April.⁴ They were renewed in letter after letter. For example, on the 30th April he wrote to Berthier: "I need seasoned troops and experienced generals to lead the columns. The Saxons, I repeat, are not fit for an isolated action. There is not a single one of their generals to whom I could trust an independent operation. With French troops I could count on energy and experience, but I repeat that with the Saxons I can undertake nothing."⁵ Berthier having promised to send

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, 15262.

² Peyrusse, 20, 21.

³ The other debatable incident was his absence from Jena.

⁴ *Supra*, 206, 208.

⁵ *Sarrans*, i. 123, 124.

him some French troops, and having failed to do so, Bernadotte wrote again on 6th May :—

MARSHAL BERNADOTTE TO MARSHAL BERTHIER.

"PRINCE,—Your Highness announced to me that in my advance I shall meet French troops and reinforcements on the way: I have not, however, as yet received any troops, and I experience every day more and more the absolute necessity of the Saxon Army being supported and stimulated into exertion by the example of some better disciplined troops. This appears to me the more indispensable, as my army is destined to carry on isolated operations on the flank of the Grand Army. I entreat Your Highness to recall His Majesty's attention to this subject, which really concerns the good of his service, and to let me know whether I am to rely upon any reinforcements of French troops."¹

No satisfactory reply having been given to these entreaties, Bernadotte returned to the subject in very precise terms on the 28th May :—

MARSHAL BERNADOTTE TO MARSHAL BERTHIER.

"PRINCE,—In order to debouch from this place with some prospect of success it would be necessary to have a corps more numerous than the one under my orders, and especially some well-disciplined troops and experienced generals to command the several columns. The Saxons are, I repeat, quite incompetent to act as an independent corps. I request Your Highness to make my position known to the Emperor. I cannot at present undertake any offensive operations without compromising the bridge of Linz. If I had 8,000 or 10,000 Frenchmen under my orders I might venture upon some operation. But I repeat that with the Saxons I can undertake nothing.

"J. B. BERNADOTTE, Prince of Ponte Corvo."²

Bernadotte's anxiety was increased by the intelligence that Dresden was threatened with attack. When the news reached them that the city, which was the home

¹ Sarrans, 237.

² *Ib.*, i. 338.

of many of them and an object of interest to them all, was in danger of assault, the Saxon troops were rendered more unsettled and more unreliable than ever. They had grievances enough already. For instance, they resented having to use French watch-words and war-cries.¹ It is easy to understand the feelings of patriotic soldiers, when they realised that their own country was in peril, and that they were obliged to fight at a distant place under alien leadership and for an alien cause.

The Emperor paid very little attention to Bernadotte's complaints. On 22nd June he wrote to him from Vienna :—

THE EMPEROR TO MARSHAL BERNADOTTE

"MY COUSIN,—Your Aide-de-Camp has brought me your letter about the invasion of Dresden. It is very unfortunate and annoying that such a fine city should be the victim of the attack of a few misguided partisans. . . . All that kind of thing will come to an end, in a few days as the result of the battle which will destroy the great army of Austria. NAPOLEON."²

Bernadotte renewed his warnings, and on 23rd June the Emperor wrote :—

THE EMPEROR TO MARSHAL BERNADOTTE

"MY COUSIN,—I have received your letter about the attitude of the Saxons. . . . Your corps is required for the battle which is about to take place. After the battle, you and your corps can retire, if necessary, to the North of Germany. Be prepared, and take care to have four or five days rations with you, and your cartridges and artillery in good order, so that you may take your usual part (*figurer selon votre ordinaire*) in the approaching battle. NAPOLEON."³

As his protests led to no response, Bernadotte finally sent his senior Aide-de-Camp, Colonel Lebrun, to head-

¹ Hans Kloeber, 253-256.

² *Corr. de Nap.*, 15408.

³ *Corr. de Nap.*, 15423.

quarters to remind the Emperor that he was leaving the Ninth Corps with hardly any troops except Saxons. Napoleon, after listening to the Colonel delivering his message, replied: " But, Colonel Lebrun, does the Prince make no account of his own renown? " ¹ He could have said nothing that would be better calculated to sooth the Gascon's vanity and love of glory, or to console him for not receiving the French troops for which he was clamouring.

On the 2nd and 3rd July the Emperor, having concentrated his army near Vienna, issued his orders for the crossing of the Danube, preparatory to a great battle. It is obvious, from the correspondence to which we have referred, that Bernadotte was about to take the field under very discouraging and disadvantageous circumstances.

¹ Lafosse, ii. 72.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE EVE OF WAGRAM

JULY 5, 1809

"Sire, you occupy too elevated a position to make it possible that you could wish to grudge any one his share of glory. But an act of disloyalty or treason has gone near to deprive me of the fruits of thirty years of faithful service."—*Bernadotte to the Emperor, after Enzersdorf, on 5th July 1809.*

THE fortunes of the Emperor were staked upon the approaching battle. His own legions were larger than he had ever yet commanded in action; but the Austrians had also put into the field a stronger and more effective army than in any previous campaign. They were encouraged by their recent successes at Essling and at Aspern. They were burning to recover their capital and to drive the hated invader from their frontiers. Napoleon, realising his danger, had called together his scattered armies from every corner of his empire. On the night of the 4th July, taking advantage of a terrific thunder and rain storm, he succeeded by a clever stratagem in transferring his whole army to the other bank, without losing a man.

General Lejeune, who was an artist as well as a soldier, gives in his memoirs a fine word picture of the crossing of the Danube on the tempestuous night of the 4th July. He mentions that at one moment a flash of lightning revealed to him close at hand the figure of the Emperor in his little cap and gray cloak, silhouetted distinctly against the dark background of the thunder-storm.¹

¹ Lejeune, i. 315.

The operations of the 5th July, sometimes called the Battle of Enzersdorf, formed a prelude to the battle of Wagram, which was fought on the following day. The Austrians were ranged on the hills beyond the River Russbach, in front of the important position of Wagram. The French army, in their advance from Enzersdorf, near the river's bank, took the shape of an opening fan, branching right and left, and carrying all before them. The only check was described as follows in the Bulletin : "The enemy made some resistance at the village of Raasdorf, which the Prince of Ponte Corvo attacked and carried with the Saxon troops." ¹

General Lejeune's account is to the same effect. He says that "until the afternoon the resistance of the Austrians' side had been feeble, and it was only with Bernadotte's Corps that the struggle had been at all severe, the enemy having delivered several vigorous charges which the Saxon cavalry repulsed with great courage." ² The Austrians then lined the heights behind the Russbach River, in order to defend the village of Wagram. What happened is described by Lejeune in terms very like those in the Bulletin : "The struggle lasted for several hours, and after terrible carnage Wagram and Baumersdorf were taken by the French. The Archduke Charles then came up with fresh troops and rallying the fugitives he assumed the offensive. At the same moment the Saxons under Marshal Bernadotte penetrated into Wagram on the opposite side to that by which General Oudinot entered it. In the darkness, intensified by the smoke of gun-fire, the Saxons were fired upon either by some of their own comrades or by French troops, and suffered heavy losses. Thanks to this cruel mistake, the Austrians were able to retake Wagram and Baumersdorf, where they passed the night." ³

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, 15505.

² Lejeune, i. 317.

³ *Ib.*, 318.

This was a most unfortunate misadventure, as a result of which the Saxon troops were seriously disheartened. But it was not the only incident of the day that affected Bernadotte. He complained bitterly that he had been the victim of treachery or malevolence on the part of the Headquarter Staff. Two battalions of Grenadiers had already been withdrawn from his corps to serve as a guard on the Island of Libau. At a critical moment he sent for his reserve, which consisted of General Dupas' division, but it was nowhere to be found. It turned out that it had been sent to reinforce Oudinot. This had been done by Berthier's orders, without any notice being given to Bernadotte, who was allowed to advance and to arrange his movements on the supposition that his reserve and light cavalry remained at his disposal in case of emergencies. Bernadotte attributed the failure of the operation mainly to the absence of his reserve.¹

Bernadotte demanded an explanation from Dupas who replied as follows:—

GENERAL DUPAS TO MARSHAL BERNADOTTE.

"SIR,—The time is too short to permit of my answering all that Your Highness has said to me concerning the orders which I executed, contrary to those which I received from you during the day of the 5th. Nevertheless, I must not defer placing it on record in writing that on that day I received several orders, both from His Highness the Prince of Neuchatel (Berthier), and from His Majesty's Aides-de-Camp, and from Orderlies attached to the Headquarters, always in His Majesty's name. As regards the order which I was ordered to execute on the other side of the river, it was given to me by an Aide-de-Camp of His Highness the Prince of Neuchatel, I think his name is Girardin. . . .

"GENERAL DUPAS."²

¹ Gourgaud, ii. 381.

² Lafosse, ii. 78.

It is reasonable to suppose that the sending of Bernadotte's reserve to some other part of the field was to be accounted for either by some blunder or some emergency. But Bernadotte was not disposed to put any such charitable construction on the incident. To General Dumas, who came to him next morning from Headquarters, he complained that his army corps had been sacrificed in a disloyal way, and that at the moment when he was ordered to advance, his reserve was taken away without his knowledge. He also told the General to inform the Emperor that after the battle he would ask for his retirement. To the Emperor himself he is described as saying: "Sire, you occupy too elevated a position to make it possible that you could wish to grudge anyone his share of glory. But an act of disloyalty or treason has gone near to deprive me of the fruits of thirty years of faithful service."¹ The Emperor replied that the calling away of Bernadotte's reserve was one of those errors that were inevitable in the course of critical operations.

In his conversation with Dumas, Bernadotte unfortunately was not satisfied with making complaints. He indulged in some very unguarded criticisms of the Emperor's strategy. He said that the position of Wagram made it the key of the whole battlefield, that the youngest sub-lieutenant in the whole army would have recognised its importance, and that a wise Commander-in-Chief, instead of depriving him (Bernadotte) of his reserve, would have sent him at least 20,000 men. With 20,000 men he would have been able to hold Wagram, to avoid the necessity of a bloody battle on the following day, and "by a scientific manœuvre compel the Archduke Charles to lay down his arms almost without a blow."

These remarks were reported to Napoleon, who noted them for future use. He presumably knew as

¹ Lafosse, ii. 79.

well as Bernadotte the importance of the position of Wagram, but probably had not, at that stage of the operations, 20,000 men disposable for such a purpose. At all events, Bernadotte and his Saxon troops, instead of receiving thanks for penetrating to Wagram, incurred reproach for the misadventure which had caused the abandonment of the village.

When the battle of Wagram began next day, the Ninth Army Corps entered upon it in anything but a confident mood. While the Saxon troops were demoralised, and their Commander, whether justly or unjustly, felt indignant and aggrieved, the Emperor was in no mood to make allowance for any shortcomings on his part or on that of his corps.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE BATTLE OF WAGRAM

JULY 6, 1809

"At Wagram he (Bernadotte) displayed great bravery and ran serious danger, but his corps, formed mainly of the Saxons, were several times routed, and the Emperor was dissatisfied, and ordered it to be dissolved."—ALFRED RAMBAUD, *Revue Bleue*, January 1802, pages 67, 68.

"Was this the scientific manœuvre by which you were going to make the Archduke Charles lay down his arms?"—*Napoleon's taunt to Bernadotte when the Saxons were routed at Wagram.*

THE operations of the 5th July were compared in the last chapter to the opening of a fan. The position of Napoleon's army on the morning of the 6th July resembled a fan, after it has been opened, with its handle at Raasdorf, where the Emperor bivouacked. On the right was Davout, on the left were Masséna and Bernadotte. In the centre Napoleon had massed men and artillery in tremendous strength.

The Austrian plan of battle was to get behind the French left and to cut them off from the Danube. With this object in view the Austrian right wing was hurled at the position occupied by Marshals Masséna and Bernadotte with such vigour as to carry all before them. Masséna's troops were driven back, and Bernadotte's Saxons were routed and retreated in confusion. The Austrians pushed forward and seemed to be within easy reach of the banks of the Danube and of the bridges, which were necessarily links in the chain of the French lines of communication and retreat.

Napoleon had no anxiety. One of his favourite tactics was to tempt his adversaries to extend a wing, just far enough to get out of touch with the rest of their

army, and then to strike home a deadly blow at their centre. He had won Austerlitz by such a *coup*. As the enemy were playing his game, he encouraged them to waste their strength upon trying to turn his left, where Masséna showed all his characteristic courage and tenacity. He had been disabled by a fall from his horse on the previous day, and had to command his army corps in a carriage.¹ It was said afterwards that the only man in his corps who was braver than himself, was the coachman who had to guide his horses under a heavy fire, both in the advance and in the retreat. Bernadotte succeeded in rallying the routed Saxons and in helping Masséna to hold back the enemy's right.²

Napoleon waited until the Austrians had overshot the mark. Then, under cover of one hundred guns, known in history as "the Grand Battery of Wagram," he hurled 30,000 infantry and 6,000 cavalry at the Wagram position. This massed charge, which was splendidly led by MacDonald, overthrew everything in its path, and made a gap through which Oudinot was enabled to gain the village of Wagram and to finish the day. The victory secured Napoleon's crown for another period of nearly five years; and he rewarded Masséna and Davout with principalities, and MacDonald and Oudinot with batons and duchies.

The day of Wagram was one of the most strenuous and thankless in Bernadotte's life. Every writer agrees that he showed the utmost personal courage, and, if it had not been for his fanfaronading Order of the Day after the battle, his reputation would not have suffered. But, before we come to the aftermath, let us follow his proceedings in the field, which have been described as follows by M. Pingaud: "At Wagram everything contributed to make Bernadotte a defeated general in a

¹ "On se bat, on se bat, Macdonald se dépêche,
Et Masséna blessé passe dans sa calèche."—*L'Aiglon*.

² "Le Prince de Ponte Corvo, qui avait 'rallié' et reformé les Saxons."—*Victoires Conquêtes*, etc., xix, 212.

victorious army—his yielding to discouragement, the slowness of his movements, the bad quality of his troops. In the position to which he had retired at Aderklaa near the centre of the French line " (it was the left centre) "he had to sustain for a time the principal effort of the enemy. His Saxon troops failed again. He exposed himself bravely in order to rally them against the attacking force. Seven or eight of his staff were killed or wounded ; and he had a narrow escape of death from a sword-thrust. Napoleon came in person. . . and helped to inspire some of his battalions." Pingaud truly observes that Bernadotte was "*moins coupable d'avoir mal agi, que d'avoir trop parlé.*"¹

Napoleon's appearance on the scene is said by Marbot to have been the occasion of a dramatic scene. The Emperor, to whom General Dumas had reported Bernadotte's strictures on the strategy of the previous day, turned to the Marshal and said sarcastically : "Was this the scientific manœuvre by which you were going to make the Archduke Charles lay down his arms?" Marbot then gives fling to his imagination by declaring that Napoleon then and there dismissed Bernadotte from the field of battle and ordered him to leave the army within twenty-four hours, and that the Marshal in despair sought death at the hands of the enemy.

This part of Marbot's story is not supported by any reliable corroboration, but there can be no doubt that some high words passed between the Emperor and the Marshal on the battlefield. It was said that the Marshal, in complaining of the taking away of his reserve, remarked cuttingly that the army was no longer what it had been in 1795, *i.e.*, in the pre-Napoleonic era. Napoleon replied sarcastically : "My army has always been the same, but there are some men in it whom I no longer recognise."² It was also said that when the Emperor had ordered an advance in mass

¹ Pingaud, 84-88 ; Picard, 328.

² Pingaud, 86.

formation, Bernadotte told the Saxons to advance in open order, and, when reminded of the Emperor's command, he shouted in the hearing of the Emperor or of one of his Staff: "Obey me. It is not my habit to allow men to be killed unnecessarily."¹ Another story was current that Bernadotte refused to obey an order which forbade any soldier to leave his post for the purpose of removing the wounded from the field, and that he openly protested against ambulance wagons, which were intended for the Saxon wounded, being taken away to draw cannon. There is no doubt that the sufferings of the wounded were exceptionally severe in this terrible battle.²

It would be unsafe to accept unreservedly all these gossip tales, but there seems to be no doubt that the battlefield of Wagram was the scene of angry recriminations, and that bitter things were said which were either heard by the personages concerned or reported to them. Yet these incidents might have been quickly forgotten, if Bernadotte had not capped the misadventures of Wagram by flattering his Saxon troops in a highly-coloured Order of the Day which involved him in serious trouble.

¹ Sarrans, i. 133.

² Lafosse, ii., 91.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE GASCONADE AFTER WAGRAM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES JULY 6–AUGUST 5, 1809

"Amidst the ravages of the enemy's artillery your living columns remained as motionless as bronze."—*Extract from Bernadotte's Order of the Day to the Saxons after Wagram, 9th July 1809.*

"In truth that column of granite was constantly routed."—*Napoleon's comment, 29th July 1809.*

WE now approach an episode in Bernadotte's career which helps to justify Napoleon's description of him as "*un vrai Gascon*," and Albert Sorel's remark that he was "*un pur Gascon de Gascogne*." His Saxon troops had done badly and had suffered severely in the battle. He was in a position to point to the many letters in which he had warned the Emperor that they were not to be relied on and were unfit for any independent manœuvre. He might have said: "I told you so"; and, in face of the correspondence, it would have been difficult for Napoleon to reply. But Bernadotte was always disposed to associate himself with his subordinates. Napoleon once compared him to an "old corporal, who complains lustily when a man is taken from his file."¹ He remained the same to the end. What he was to his file as a corporal, he became to his regiment as a colonel, to his corps as a marshal, to his province as a governor, and to his subjects as a king. His instinct was to identify himself wholeheartedly with "his men," and to take up the cudgels for them, right or wrong, *contra mundum*, and what was even more dangerous, *contra imperatorem*.

¹ *Bernadotte, The First Phase*, p. 282.

On the evening after the battle, when the Marshal found himself with his disheartened troops, he addressed them as follows: "I wished to lead you to a field of honour. You have been face to face with death all the time. You have done all that I had a right to expect from you. But they will not do you justice because you were under my command."¹ The chagrin of the corps and its Commander, which these words expressed, was aggravated when the Emperor published his Bulletin.² It does not appear to have been unjust to the Saxons. It gave them credit for having carried the village of Raasdorf on 5th July; and they had no right to complain that nothing was said of the part which they took in the battle of 6th July. But, smarting under their heavy losses, they resented Napoleon's audacious under-estimate of his—killed at 1,500 and of his wounded at 3,000 or 4,000 only. His losses were more like 25,000, and the Saxon casualties alone are said to have amounted to nearly 6,000.

On the 9th, Bernadotte, in order to allay the resentment and despondency of his soldiers, issued the following Order of the Day: "Saxons, on the day of the 5th July, between 7,000 and 8,000 of you pierced the centre of the enemy's army, and fought your way to Deutch-Wagram in spite of the resistance of 40,000 of the enemy supported by fifty guns. You fought until midnight, and you bivouacked in the middle of the Austrian lines. On the 6th at daybreak you renewed the combat with the same perseverance. Amidst the ravages of the enemy's artillery, your living columns remained as motionless as bronze. The great Napoleon witnessed your devotion. He numbers you amongst his braves. Saxons, a soldier's fortune consists in doing his duty, you have nobly done yours."³

The allusion to what occurred on the 5th July was

¹ Gourgaud, ii. 385.

² *Corr. de Nap.*, 15505.

³ Sarrans, i. 134.

high-flown, but not untrue. General Lejeune¹ relates that the Saxons on that day "penetrated" to Wagram. But they did not hold the village, and the mention of "Wagram" was liable to be misunderstood, and was in fact misconstrued as a claim to the credit of the victory of the next day. As regards the battle of the 6th, if Bernadotte had said that the Saxons had suffered heavily, and had rallied bravely after their rout, no objection could have been taken; but to say that they were "motionless as bronze" was an amazing "inexactitude." Bernadotte had frequently asked for his retirement, and had repeated the request during the recriminations on the field of Wagram. When this proclamation was brought to Napoleon's notice, he took Bernadotte at his word, allowing him to leave the army on the pretext of taking the waters of Plombières.

It is probable that no further notice would ever have been taken of this Order of the Day, if its reproduction in a Frankfort newspaper, from which it was copied by other journals, had not obtained for it a wide publicity. There is no evidence that Bernadotte was responsible, and he always disclaimed responsibility, for its publication. It is probable that the German press took it up because it was a compliment to German troops. For the same reason it was keenly resented by French generals and soldiers. The other Marshals, who took no notice of the Order so long as it was addressed to no larger audience than the Saxon corps, were up in arms when they read it in a public journal. Thus it came about that nearly three weeks elapsed before the storm burst round the head of its author. On the 29th July the Emperor wrote to the Minister of War:—

"THE EMPEROR TO THE MINISTER OF WAR.

"If you have any occasion for seeing the Prince of Ponte Corvo, please convey to him my displeasure at the ridiculous Order of the Day, which he has had

¹ Lejeune, ii. 317.

published in all the newspapers. It is all the more out of place because he himself was complaining about the Saxons during the whole day. The Order of the Day contains other inaccuracies. It was General Oudinot who took Wagram on the 6th at mid-day ; so the Prince of Ponte Corvo could not have taken it. It is not true that the Saxons forced the enemy's centre on the 5th. They did not fire a shot. Speaking generally, I shall be well pleased that you should know that the Prince of Ponte Corvo has not done well in this campaign. He is a man who wants riches, pleasure, greatness, but does not wish to buy them by the dangers and fatigues of war. In truth that column of granite was constantly routed.

NAPOLEON."¹

In view of Bernadotte's previous protests and warnings, these strictures were harsh and unjust ; but he had brought them on himself. The Emperor followed them up by sending a circular to the Marshals :—

THE EMPEROR TO THE MARSHALS

" His Majesty testifies his displeasure at the Marshal Prince of Ponte Corvo's Order of the Day, dated Leopoldau on 7th July, which has been inserted in nearly all the newspapers in the following terms. (Here follows Bernadotte's Order of the Day.) Independently of the circumstance that the Emperor commands his army in person, it belongs to him alone to assign to each one the share of glory to which he may be entitled. His Majesty owes the success of his army to his French Troops, and not to any foreign troops. The Prince of Ponte Corvo's Order of the Day tends to put forward unfounded pretensions in favour of troops of a secondary description, and is contrary to the truth, to policy, and to the national honour. The success of the battle of the 6th was due to the Corps of Marshals the Duke of Rivoli (Masséna) and General Oudinot, who pierced the enemy's centre, while the Duke of Auerstadt's corps was turning their left. The village of Deutsch-Wagram was not in our power on the day of the 5th. The village was taken, but not until noon on the 6th, by the corps

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, 15595.

of Marshal Oudinot. The Prince of Ponte Corvo's troops did not remain 'motionless as brass.' It was the first to beat a retreat. His Majesty was obliged to cover it by the Corps of the Viceroy and by the Divisions commanded by Marshal MacDonald. . . . It was to that Marshal that the praise is due which the Prince of Ponte Corvo attributes to himself. Nevertheless, the Emperor directs that this Order, which might pain the Saxons . . . shall remain secret, and shall only be circulated among the Marshals. . . . NAPOLEON."¹

When Bernadotte was spoken to by the Minister of War about his Order of the Day, he replied that he had issued it to encourage his troops, and that he regretted it had found its way into the newspapers.² He added that he was always ready to shed his blood for the Emperor, asking no reward except that his services should be appreciated. He never made any other excuse or defence, and he steadfastly maintained that he had been treated unjustly in the matter; but he had few sympathisers except the Saxons, who always remained grateful to him. Their Chief of the Staff said afterwards that his "memory would never be effaced from the hearts of the Saxons."³ This prophecy was verified when they deserted to his side four years afterwards in the campaign of Leipsic.

This gasconading Order of the Day was no mere vulgar exhibition of boastfulness or self-glorification. The Marshal chose to identify himself with his disheartened corps, instead of blaming them, and sheltering himself behind his repeated warnings. If Bernadotte had acted otherwise, he might have received some credit for his share in the battle of Wagram, because he displayed personal bravery, and the presence of his corps, notwithstanding its rout on the morning of the 6th, was a factor in the result. At St. Helena, Napoleon, when speaking of his habit of

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, 15614.

² Pelet, iv. 31.

³ Gourgaud, ii. 385.

concentrating his forces for an attack, said: "To tell the truth, what has made me win so many battles, was my habit, instead of scattering my forces, of massing them all at the striking point. At Wagram I called up Bernadotte, who was forty leagues away on the Danube. In that way I collected all my forces, so that I had 160,000 men under my orders, while the Archduke Charles had left Prince John at Presburg."¹

The only motive of Bernadotte's Order of the Day was probably to revive the drooping spirits of his men. They were disheartened and dejected, and he saw no harm in toning them up with a plentiful dose of unmerited praise. But some of his critics² represented the Order as a sample of the Marshal's tendency to vain-glory, vanity, and self-conceit; and Count Philip de Ségur attributed it to the Marshal's "irrepressible desire to win hearts and gain partisans on all occasions." M. Guillon is probably nearer the mark when he calls it an "*ordre de jour flatteur*,"³ and reminds his readers that all the generals of that day were in the habit of flattering their troops in their Orders of the Day. What happened on this occasion was that the General, being "*un vrai Gascon*" with a very sore head and a very disheartened army, surpassed all his brethren in arms by publishing the most sensational and extravagant "*ordre de jour flatteur*" of his time.

¹ Gourgaud, ii. 418, 421; Montholon, ii. 363, 364, cited by Picard, 67.

² e.g. Savary (Eng. tr.), ii. 131.

³ Guillon, 160.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE WALCHEREN EXPEDITION

JULY-SEPTEMBER 1809

"If I am offered only a company of veterans for the defence of the Empire I shall not hesitate to accept such a command."
—Bernadotte in reference to the Walcheren Expedition, July 1809.

THE ostensible reason for Bernadotte's departure from the Army was the taking of a cure at the Waters of Plombières; but, as a matter of fact, he appears to have returned to his country house near Paris where he remained for some days under the shadow of a disgrace which was soon dispelled by an unexpected event.

In the last days of July a sensation was created in the French Capital by the sudden intelligence that an English force under the Earl of Chatham had effected a landing on the Continent and was occupying the Flemish Island of Walcheren. Napoleon was in Vienna. His armies were in Austria and Spain. The news of an English invasion came like a thunderbolt to the Council of Ministers which, in the absence of the Emperor, carried on the government of France.

The Council, the principal members of which were Cambacérès, Arch-Chancellor and President of the Council, General Clarke, Minister of War, Fouché, Minister of Police and of the Interior, and Admiral Decrès, Minister of Marine, was convoked for the 29th July. Decrès, as the head of the Navy, took the lead. He advocated the calling out of the reserves, and the appointment of Marshal Bernadotte, Prince of Ponte Corvo, to the Command-in-Chief of an Army of Defence.

The Minister of War protested, declaring that the Emperor would certainly disapprove of a levy of National Guards, and of the selection for the post of Commander-in-Chief of a Marshal who had come home under a cloud. A second Council was called for the following day, when Talleyrand was invited to attend. The Council shrank from adopting the proposals of Decrès, who was surprised when Fouché drew him aside after the sitting and congratulated him upon his bold initiative. "Then why did not you support me at the Council?" said Decrès. Fouché replied that he intended to take the matter into his own hands in his double capacity of Minister of Police and Minister of the Interior.¹

Fouché proceeded to act with astonishing vigour. On the 2nd August he took upon himself the responsibility of sending peremptory letters to the Prefects of fifteen Northern Departments ordering a levy of National Guards; and he let it be known everywhere that he agreed with Decrès that Marshal Bernadotte was the man best fitted to defend the Empire in this emergency. On 3rd August Bernadotte presented himself to the Arch-Chancellor and to the Minister of War "booted and spurred," and tendered his services. To Cambacérès he declared: "If I am offered only a company of veterans for the defence of the Empire, I shall not hesitate to accept such a command."²

Both Cambacérès and Clarke were embarrassed. Clarke blamed Fouché for raising a "Frankenstein" by calling out the National Guards, and said that France would require an army to protect herself from them. Fouché retorted by reproaching Clarke, who was an Irishman of Ulster parentage, with being a foreigner.³ The other Ministers were afraid to make any move without Napoleon's express approval: and they

¹ *Fouché*, par Madelin, ii. Chap. XVIII.

² Pelet, iv. 322.

³ Guillon, 162.

expected that Fouché's proceedings and the proposed employment of the disgraced Marshal would evoke a torrent of disapprobation from their imperious master.

These prudent personages sustained a disagreeable surprise when they received a sheaf of letters from the Emperor, written on 10th, 11th, and 13th August, blaming them for their inaction and for their timidity in the face of a national crisis, adopting Fouché's vigorous measures, and approving of the appointment of the Prince of Ponte Corvo to the command of the army, to which he gave the name of the Army of Antwerp.¹ It appears, from Napoleon's letters of the 16th and 18th August to General Clarke, that he was annoyed at the command of the army in the Netherlands having been given to, or assumed by, his brother Louis, King of Holland, in his character of Titular Constable of France, which involved the command of French Troops by Dutch generals and the intervention of the Dutch Minister of War in the affairs of France.

Let us turn aside to recall the meaning, and to glance at the history, of the ill-fated Walcheren Expedition, which Bernadotte was now employed to resist. Antwerp in 1809 was to the Emperor of the French what Kiel a hundred years later became to the Kaiser Wilhelm. It was Napoleon's naval base and arsenal in the North Sea, which he valued above all his other naval ports, because it faced England. He held it out as a standing menace to English commerce, and as a base for a possible invasion of the British Isles. That was why Castlereagh and his colleagues planned the Walcheren Expedition, which was intended to destroy a great naval base, and to make a diversion in favour of Austria in her campaign on the Danube.

The idea of the Expedition was excellent; but its execution turned out to be a ghastly failure. First and foremost, the enterprise was too late to be of any

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, 15633, 15635, 15636, 15643, 15698.

help to Austria, since her fate had been decided on the field of Wagram fourteen days before the Expedition started.¹ In the next place, the Earl of Chatham, instead of advancing rapidly against Antwerp, waited to besiege the fortress of Flushing.

But the gravest of the many mistakes was the occupation of the pestilential island of Walcheren. Military authorities were unaware of the character of its climate. It was a place where the natives lived in a chronic state of fever and ague, while it was a positive death-trap to a stranger. The sickness and mortality in the camp was terrible. The principal occupation of the troops was the burying of the dead; while in the hospitals there were 4,000 before the end of August, and 10,000 before the end of September. On the 21st September a small fever-stricken remnant of the once magnificent army re-embarked and returned to England. The aftermath of the Expedition entailed the court-martial of the Commanders, a duel between Castlereagh and Canning, and a ministerial crisis, as a result of which Perceval became Premier.

The choice of Chatham as Commander-in-Chief was a most unfortunate one, as he had no qualifications except that he was son of one great man and the brother of another. One feels inclined to ask what would have happened if Sir Arthur Wellesley had been spared for a few weeks from the Peninsula, or if Chatham's 40,000 men had been sent to Spain instead of Walcheren. In the former event Wellesley would have met Bernadotte in a campaign which might have changed the course of history in Northern Europe. In the latter event more rapid results might have been achieved in the Peninsula.

The story of the Walcheren Expedition of 1809 has some resemblance to that of the Gallipoli Expedition of 1915, but it had none of the glory that will be for ever associated with the names of Anzac and Suvla Bay.

¹ See speech of Lord Porchester, in moving for an Inquiry. Grey, *Walcheren*, 9, and Alison's *Castlereagh and Stewart*, i, 304, 317.

The following passage in a letter written by an officer at the Walcheren front is not without a melancholy interest: "Why does it happen that we are always thus grossly deceived in essentials? Is it that we are too credulous? Or is it that the frauds practised upon us exceed the ordinary degree? If your Cabinet had been thoroughly informed of the scene of operations, they would never have sent such an expedition."¹

The deadly vapours of Walcheren came to Bernadotte's aid. The English army was allowed to fall a prey to the agues and fevers which hung around the locality, and before the end of September the Expedition had been defeated and dispersed by these epidemic enemies.

¹ *Letters from Flushing*, 199.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

BERNADOTTE AND WALCHEREN

JULY-SEPTEMBER 1809

Bernadotte at Antwerp made prompt and careful preparation for defence."—THIERS.

THE results of the Walcheren Expedition from the attackers' point of view were dealt with in the last chapter. It remains to inquire what part was played by Bernadotte as Commander of the army of defence. According to his apologists, such as Montgaillard and Touchard Lafosse, the Marshal saved the Belgic provinces from the English invasion. According to Napoleon at St. Helena, Bernadotte at Antwerp "talked a good deal, wrote a good deal, and did nothing."¹ The truth lies between. Neither he nor any other human force defeated the enemy, but Thiers' moderate statement that Bernadotte at Antwerp "made prompt and careful preparations for defence," probably fairly represents all that he accomplished. He organised into an army a motley crowd of soldiers, sailors, and National Guards. He co-operated with the naval authorities towards taking every suitable precaution against attack. He matured plans to meet every emergency that might arise. He resorted to ingenious devices for making his forces appear more numerous and formidable than they really were. He animated the troops by his inspiring personality and by his military eloquence.

A letter from an English officer at the front describes the impression which he created upon his enemy: "Bernadotte has certainly arrived at Flushing. You may imagine therefore that our labours have rather

¹ Montholon, i. 218, 219.

commenced than passed away." A few days afterwards he wrote: "The French have become too strong for us to make a *coup de main*. . . . They have made the most exhaustive efforts. It is really wonderful with what expedition they have assembled their forces from every quarter. Bernadotte is certainly at Antwerp."¹

A M. de Rocca, who was serving in one of the Belgian garrisons, has written an account of the Walcheren Expedition from the French point of view. He says that King Louis Bonaparte, immediately on being informed of the landing of the English, called out the western garrisons and conscripts, and sent them to Antwerp, whither he himself conducted his Dutch guards. The western garrisons consisted of old soldiers who had for a long time been leading inactive lives at the regimental *dépôts*, and, with the conscripts, formed an undisciplined crowd who had no Commander-in-Chief and no military organisation. The rough levies occupied the first half of August in collecting at Antwerp, where the inhabitants were astonished, and many of them were disappointed, that the English did not seize the place. When Flushing fell on the 16th August everybody regarded the city as at the mercy of the invader.

It was at this stage of the operations that Bernadotte arrived. We find in de Rocca's story many allusions to the Commander-in-Chief, whose energy and talent seems to have made a deep impression on this eyewitness. De Rocca's narrative shows what an easy prey Antwerp would have been, if the English had had a competent commander. We quote the following extract: "Such was the situation of affairs on the Scheldt, when Marshal Bernadotte, Prince of Ponte Corvo, arrived to take command of the troops. It required the activity of one of the best Captains of France to organise an army, or rather an armed rabble, in such desperate circumstances and in such

¹ *Letters from Flushing*, 177, 234.

inextricable chaos as we found ourselves. Everything had to be created. The works had hardly been begun. We had very little of munitions or artillery, and a deficiency of gunners. Most of our detachments, for want of stores, had to live by requisition on the inhabitants, who were consequently set against us. On the morning of the 15th August we were reviewed by the King of Holland and by Marshal Bernadotte. The Dutch Guards made a smart display, but the French troops presented the appearance of a feeble, disorganised, undisciplined crowd. Sailors, dragoons, lancers, chasseurs, hussars, even cuirassiers, with cavalry equipments, marched to the beat of an infantry drum. The crowd included Poles, Hanoverians, and all the other races that were included in the French Empire. It was difficult to make such a heterogeneous lot defile. Marshal Bernadotte passed through the ranks, informing himself of every detail of the composition . . . of each corps. Sometimes he placed himself at the head of a platoon or squadron, so as to show the young officers what to do. By his kindly manner he inspired confidence where it did not exist before. He distinguished between the awkward zeal of the young recruit and the careless indifference of the old soldier who had been a long time in the *depôts* without seeing active service. The latter he reproved sternly. On the other hand he addressed words of encouragement about their drill to the young conscripts: "My children," he said, "it is good, but it can be made better." He took a young conscript's musket and showed him how to handle it. He spent the 16th August in inspecting the Engineers and in fixing places for the new batteries. He re-arranged the position of the whole army . . . his arrival composed the conflicts of authority which had existed among the chiefs."¹

It would be tedious to follow de Rocca through his account of all the proceedings of the Commander-in-

¹ De Rocca, *Walcheren*.

Chief. It comes to this, that the Marshal created order out of confusion and made an army out of a mob. He says that on 18th August there were only 12,000 troops at Antwerp, without Staff, many without uniforms, and most of them without arms. A week afterwards, on 26th August, there were 26,000 men, full of ardour and zeal, almost as well organised as regular troops of the line.

We may leave de Rocca after noticing a few interesting little passages from his monograph. He tells us that Bernadotte placed a naval officer on the highest point of Antwerp Cathedral, who kept him informed of every movement of the enemy's fleet in the Scheldt. He presents us with a very graphic and eloquent description of the British fleet as seen from Antwerp: "On the 18th the English men-o'-war which had remained before Flushing spread sail and moved up the Scheldt towards Antwerp. . . . That thick forest of masts, that immense collection of floating fortresses, which had taken up such a daring position within cannon shot of us, presented a most imposing spectacle. When a change of tide caused the water of the Scheldt to take the opposite direction, we saw all the ships at a given signal swing round so as to breast the current obliquely. There was such perfect unity and symmetry in the movements of all these ships of various sizes, which composed that immense quadruple line, that one might say that they moved to the rhythm of harmonious music."

De Rocca tells an amusing story. Bernadotte, while inspecting outposts, stopped at a cottage and was given a cup of milk by an old woman, who, like most of the country people, disliked French rule. Bernadotte rewarded her with a gold coin. She looked at it with glad surprise and exclaimed: "The English have come at last! That's a good job!"

Bernadotte displayed all his characteristic energy on this occasion; but before his preparations were complete, fever and ague had made themselves his allies and had defeated his enemy.

CHAPTER XXXIX

A SECOND GASCONADE, AND A SECOND DISGRACE—THE FOUCHÉ-BERNADOTTE RAPPROCHEMENT OF 1809

SEPTEMBER 1809

"You will tell him (Bernadotte) that he has never seen a man or received a letter without my knowledge."—*Napoleon to Fouché, September 1809.*

THE Walcheren campaign was hardly over, before Bernadotte once more incurred the Emperor's displeasure. He was probably not aware of the degree to which he had been subjected to *surveillance*.

The Emperor had sent one of his Aides-de-Camp, General Reille, from Vienna to Antwerp as bearer of a despatch. His order was: "You are to remain there to be employed under the Prince of Ponte Corvo. You can write me every day to inform me what is going on."¹ Fouché had attached to Bernadotte an agent of his own, named Julian. General Clarke, the Minister of War, placed his brother-in-law, d'Hastrel, on the Marshal's Staff, and sent him the following confidential message: "We have reason to suspect Bernadotte of strange notions and of an altogether extravagant ambition. So involve yourself in no affairs, sign nothing that would compromise you. Beware of traps."² In this way the Marshal was surrounded by eavesdroppers and intelligence officers. Every word that the loquacious Gascon spoke, every letter that he wrote, every visitor he received, the purport of each visit and its result, were all observed and reported upon.

Fouché's agent took an early opportunity of sounding the Marshal. "The Duke of Otranto," said Julian,

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, 15707, 15709, 15710.

² Felet, iv. 18.

"has told me to consult you about the move to be taken in the present critical circumstances." "Critical circumstances," exclaimed Bernadotte. "I see nothing critical about them. We have been victorious in Germany. Peace will soon be declared. I do not think the English have gained much by this expedition." "Prince," replied the agent, "the last news from Vienna announces that the Emperor is in very bad health and that his mental faculties are failing. In a word, the Duke of Otranto says that it is time to think of the safety of the Empire. He has charged me to tell your Highness that people are generally looking to you to contribute to the organisation that can offer a permanent security to all Frenchmen." The Prince replied to this mysterious suggestion in terms which probably represented quite truly his normal attitude of mind towards his Sovereign. "If," he said, "I had to choose an Emperor, certainly I should not have given the preference to Napoleon. I should not have even sought one in his family. But since France has pronounced for him, I shall remain faithful to my engagements to the nation."¹

It was reported to Napoleon that other advances of the same kind as Julian's had been made to Bernadotte by intriguers in and from Paris. It was probably on this account that the Marshal was recalled, by a letter of the 12th September, although the ostensible reason which was given for his recall was one of his Orders of the Day, dated 31st August, from which the following is an extract: "Ten days ago a formidable expedition descended on Batz. . . . You rallied to the Colours, as soon as you mustered 15,000 men. I placed you at the post of honour. . . . 20,000 comrades who are coming from all directions will soon be at your side."

This Order of the Day does not seem to contain anything objectionable, but Napoleon's *amour propre* was

¹ *Fouché*, par Madelin, i. 44146; ii. 47.

wounded by the implication that he had provided only 15,000 men for the defence of Antwerp. He wrote to the Minister of War: "My intention is not to leave the command any longer in the hands of the Prince of Ponte Corvo, *who continues to correspond with the intriguers of Paris*, and who is a man in whom I can no longer put any confidence. You will let him know that I disapprove of his Order of the Day, that it is not true that he has only 15,000 men, since with the Corps of the Duke of Conegliano (Marshal Moncey) and with that of the Duke of Istria (Marshal Bessières), I have on the Scheldt 60,000 men. But even if he had only 15,000 men, his duty was to conceal that fact from the enemy; this is the first occasion on which a general has been known to betray his position by an excess of vanity."¹

On the same day he wrote to Fouché: "I am highly displeased with the Prince of Ponte Corvo. The vanity of that man is excessive. I have ordered the War Minister to recall him. His talent is very mediocre. I have no kind of faith in him. *He lends a willing ear to all the intriguers who inundate the great Capital.* During war he is the same. He almost made me lose the Battle of Jena. He behaved feebly at Wagram. He was not at Eylau, although he might have been present; and he did not do all he might have done at Austerlitz."

On the following day the Emperor wrote a second letter to Fouché: "The Prince of Ponte Corvo, who is going to Paris, will probably have a conversation with you. You will let him know that I was displeased with his Order of the Day to the Saxons, which had a tendency to ascribe glory to them which was not their due, for they were in flight during the whole of the 6th;—that I have not been less displeased with his Order of the Day to the National Guards, in which he says he had only 15,000 men, whereas I had 60,000 on the Scheldt; that

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, 15785.

even if he had only 10,000 it is a criminal act on a general's part to let the enemy and all Europe into the secret of his numerical strength ; that he has no sense of proportion ; that I was very much dissatisfied during the Swedish business, at his having allowed the Swedes admission to our ports provisionally, thus compromising me with Russia ; *that he receives letters from a party of schemers in Paris ; that I know he is not fool enough to listen to them, but that the thing in itself is improper ; that I cannot endure intrigues ; that it is both his duty and his interest to be straightforward ; that he must get rid of all this rabble, and not permit them to write to him, and that if he does not, misfortune will overtake him.*

The Prince of Ponte Corvo made a great deal of money at Hamburg. He made money too at Elbing. That brought the bad business in Poland and the battle of Eylau on me. *I am tired of schemers, and I am shocked that a man, whom I have loaded with benefits, should lend his ear to a set of wretches whom he knows and values at their proper worth. You will tell him that he has never seen a man nor received a letter without my knowledge ; that I am aware how little importance he attaches to it all, but to permit such men to write to him and to receive them is to encourage them.* All this is private and confidential. You will make no use of these details, unless the Prince of Ponte Corvo should speak to you. If he does not, you will not say anything to him. NAPOLEON."¹

The gist of this letter, which contains so many unfounded charges and unfair innuendoes, is comprised in the italicised passages, in which Napoleon complains that Bernadotte was the object of dynastic intrigues. Napoleon acquits him of listening to the intriguers or of participating in the intrigues of which he was a passive object. But the Emperor was sensitive about everything which affected his throne, and this sensitiveness seems to offer an explanation of the unjust accusations

¹ Lecestre, *Lettres Inédites de Napoleon*, i. 361, 362 ; *New Letters of Napoleon*, 157.



JOSEPH FOUCHÉ
Duke of Otranto

contained in these letters. Too much seriousness should not be attached to what Napoleon said or wrote hastily in his angry moods. Exaggerated suggestions of misconduct against the best of his Marshals are to be found in letters which he dashed off in moments of irritation. It has already been pointed out in a former chapter that the suggestion that Bernadotte and Ney advanced on Elbing in the hope of making money is not accepted by modern writers, and is not supported by the correspondence of that time.¹ The incident illustrates that striking incompatibility of temper with reference to which it has been said that Napoleon "exacted from all his subordinates a passive obedience, while Bernadotte found it difficult to accommodate himself even to an attitude of independent submission. . . . Napoleon was born to command—Bernadotte was born not to obey."

The following is the picture which the historian Louis Madelin, in his *Life of Fouché*, drew of Bernadotte's position in 1809. It is somewhat severe, and the reference to Jena does not accord with the results of modern research; but, if not an entirely just portrait, it is at least an interesting one: "He (Bernadotte) had never frankly admitted the superiority of the soldier, of whom he regarded himself in all humility as the rival. He had himself conspired in 1802, and perhaps had been saved by the good offices of Fouché. Boastful and showy, extremely affable and very vain, but a brave officer and a distinguished leader in the field, he had known how to make himself necessary to the Emperor, who placed him above all his commanders by conferring upon him the high-flown title of Prince of Ponte Corvo. The Gascon accepted it without allowing himself to be disarmed. At Jena his hostility to the Emperor nearly led him to an act of treason. Napoleon at that time in a brief access of fury spoke of having him shot, and then accorded him a pardon which Bernadotte

¹ Montholon, ii. 404; see Chapter XXVI, p. 176 *supra*.

neither claimed nor accepted. For he continued to maintain the attitude of a *frondeur*, and was all the more dangerous, if we are to believe his contemporaries, because he had the art of rooting himself in the affections of those about him, and of making partisans everywhere. Gracious, eloquent, vivacious, he won favour and popularity. As he was, in the opinion of many officers and those not the least distinguished, the next best strategist after Napoleon, and as he retained the sympathies of Moreau's old soldiers and of a section of the Republicans, men predicted for him a brilliant future, if circumstances should give him the opportunity. He put himself forward, and would never be satisfied with a servile place behind his master beside a Junot or Duroc."¹

The same writer thus hits off Fouché's relations with Bernadotte: "Ever since 1808 Fouché . . . had been looking for a successor to the Emperor, who was then engaged in the Spanish War. He found what he wanted among the Chiefs of the Army. Two names forced themselves on his attention, Murat and Bernadotte. These two brilliant officers, possessing popularity on account of their plebeian origin, more prestige and more independence than the others, and acquiring a sort of right of succession on account of their alliances with the reigning family, seemed to make . . . excellent instruments of government for the supple and malign minister who proposed to be their guide. That is why these two cadets of Gascony became large in the eyes of the cold and cautious statesman. Hence sprang his intrigues with Joachim Murat in 1808 and again in 1814, and his singular association with Bernadotte in 1809."² If Bernadotte was the object of Fouché's intrigues in 1809, he does not appear to have participated in them. Nevertheless, as he would have benefited by them if they had fructified, Napoleon's suspicions and anxieties on their account were natural and intelligible.

¹ *Fouché*, par Madelin, Chapter XVIII, 105-127.

² *Fouché*, par Madelin, i. 441.

CHAPTER XL

BERNADOTTE IS RECONCILED TO NAPOLEON, AND IS OFFERED THE GOVERNORSHIP OF ROME

SEPTEMBER 1809—MAY 1810

BERNADOTTE, on his return to Paris, was informed by the Minister of War that the Emperor required him to repair to his Principality of Ponte Corvo, which he had never visited. The Emperor was as little interested in that Liliputian Principality as its Prince was; but he was afraid that Bernadotte might become the object of a dynastic conspiracy in Paris. Bernadotte refused to go, and when the Minister persisted, declared that he was ready to relinquish all his titles and offices and to retire into private life. Clarke, astonished at this unexpected reply, inquired whether the Marshal wished him to repeat it to the Emperor. "Certainly," said Bernadotte, "and I am ready to verify your report by my signature." "What," said Clarke, "do you put yourself into rebellion against the law?" "God forbid," said the Gascon, "but I know how to distinguish between my military duties and my civil rights. The former make it my duty to attack without hesitation 100,000 men with 3,000, if I am ordered to do so. But, as a citizen, I have the right to fix my own domicile, no matter who chooses to assign one to me."¹

Finding the Prince unwilling to visit his subjects, and being anxious to remove him from the capital, the Emperor offered him the command of the French Army in Catalonia, but the offer either did not reach him or was refused by him. It was at this period that he is

¹ Lafosse, ii, 114.

said to have declared defiantly: "The Emperor is a powerful man at Vienna, but he is not powerful enough at Paris to be able to make me leave it against my will." This gasconade sounds like an echo of the warning which he had given to Lucien Bonaparte in 1804: "He who leaves the game loses it."¹

When Clarke reported to the Emperor that Bernadotte would not go to Ponte Corvo unless actually compelled by superior force, Napoleon eased the situation by summoning him to Vienna, where some animated scenes were enacted between them. Napoleon reproached him with his proclamation at Antwerp and with his relations with the intriguers of the Capital. In these conversations Bernadotte turned to the uses of debate those arts of scientific sword-play in which as a sergeant he had been famed for proficiency. He lunged at his antagonist with a blunt home-thrust, and then disarmed him by an adroit compliment.

In the course of one of their conversations, Napoleon reminded Bernadotte reproachfully of the armistice which he had accorded to the Swedes in the North German Campaign of 1808. Bernadotte excused himself by saying that the Swedes and the Poles were the only peoples in Europe that were really devoted to the Emperor. "What sentiment, then, have the French for me?" asked Napoleon. "The admiration which your astonishing successes command," replied the Marshal. Napoleon was mollified, and patting the Marshals' forehead, exclaimed: "What a head!" "You might add, Sire, what a heart! What a soul!" said the Gascon.² "What play-acting!" would perhaps have been the comment which some impartial listener might have made upon an interchange of such insincere inanities between these two dramatic personages.

During his stay at Vienna the Emperor informed

¹ See Chapter XIII supra.

² Lafosse, ii, 118.

Bernadotte that he intended to appoint him his representative at Rome with the title of Governor-General and an immense establishment. Napoleon thus offered him a position similar to that of his own step-son, Eugène Beauharnais, the Viceroy of Italy, and of his brother-in-law, Prince Borghese, who was Governor-General of Piedmont. But Bernadotte was not to be tempted even by such a dazzling offer as the Government of the Eternal City. He declined the proposal, and again expressed his wish to be allowed to retire into private life. Napoleon replied in friendly terms: "You have indeed won enough glory to justify you in seeking repose. I don't know why it is, but I see very well that we do not understand each other. My policy, however, requires that you should go to Rome and hold my Court there. You will have a great position. I have assigned you two millions for your expenses as Governor-General, I only ask you to remain there for eighteen months. We shall have more direct relations with each other. Perhaps you will change your ideas."¹ Bernadotte escaped compliance with this command by excuses, the last of which was a request for leave to take his wife to his favourite *refugium*, the Waters of Plombières.

Meanwhile Fouché fell into disgrace for reasons which do not relate to the subject of this book. Napoleon released Bernadotte, and offered the Governor-Generalship of Rome to Fouché, who was glad to submit to such a gilded punishment. Bernadotte's avoidance of such a brilliant opportunity was soon justified, for within a few weeks an utterly unexpected event supervened, which was to lift him suddenly to the steps of an independent throne.

¹ Lafosse, ii. 120.

CHAPTER XLI¹

THE VACANCY IN THE SUCCESSION TO THE THRONE OF SWEDEN

JUNE 1810

"Both I and my kingdom have sustained the most terrible of blows through the unexpected death of my beloved son, H. R. H. the Prince Royal of Sweden. . . . I am obliged to summon the Diet to meet in mid-July to decide the important question of the succession of the throne."—*The King of Sweden to the Emperor Napoleon, 2nd June 1810.*

"We want a man, we want a soldier."—*Motto of the patriotic party in Sweden, June 1810.*

IN June 1810 Bernadotte, for the first time since the institution of the Empire, found himself in Paris and unemployed. He renewed his friendship with Madame Récamier, who since the days of the Consulate had fallen from a station of wealth to one of comparative poverty. Nevertheless, her brilliant circle remained loyal to their uncrowned Queen. In her *salon* were to be seen the old faces, but wearing new masks. Among them were Junot, now Duke of Abrantès, Masséna, now Duke of Rivoli and Prince of Essling, and Eugène Beauharnais, now Viceroy of Italy. Napoleon was awaiting the opportunity of sending Bernadotte upon some distant mission. The difficulty was to find one that would satisfy his ambition. Suddenly, like a bolt from the blue, a brilliant chance presented itself.

¹ Besides the standard works and authorities, special use has been made, in this, and in the following chapters, of *Historiska Handlingar*, Stockholm, 1899 (cited in the Notes as *H. H.*), in which are collected the despatches which passed between Paris and Stockholm between June and September 1810; of A. Geffroy's *Le Nord Scandinave*, etc., *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Vols. XI and XII. (1855); of Baron Ernoul's *Comment Bernadotte devint Roi de Suède*, founded upon Count Suremain's MSS. memoirs (cited as *Suremain*, par Ernoul), *Revue Contemporaine* (1868); and Vandal's *Napoléon et Alexandre 1er*, ii, chap. XII. 110

In the middle of June news reached Paris of the sudden death of the Prince Royal of Sweden. This young man was a scion of the house of Schleswig-Augustenburg. He had been elected successor to the throne of Sweden in the previous year (1809) after the expulsion of Gustavus IV and the elevation to the throne of Charles XIII, who was old and childless. His sudden death created a vacancy in the succession, for which four candidates were in the field. These were (1) Prince Gustavus Vasa, son of the deposed King, (2) a Prince of Oldenburg, who was backed by Russian influence, (3) the Duke of Augustenburg, brother-in-law of the King of Denmark and elder brother of the deceased Prince Royal, and (4) the King of Denmark who aspired to become the monarch of a Scandinavian empire.

It took about a fortnight, more or less, for letters to reach Paris, from Stockholm, so that the news of the death of the Prince Royal became known in the French capital in the middle of June. The Emperor's first instinct was to avail himself of the event for the purpose of consolidating and confederating a strong Scandinavian empire under his ally, the King of Denmark. Since the expulsion of Gustavus IV, Napoleon had preserved friendly relations with King Charles XIII, but his friendship was dearly bought, for he was disposed to exact rather than to confer favours. His Continental System threatened to destroy Sweden's trade with England, which was the backbone of her commercial prosperity; and he had just compelled the Swedish Government to dismiss the English Minister at Stockholm, and to recall the Swedish Minister from London. He did not desire to annex Sweden, but merely to use her. He favoured the candidature of the Danish King because he counted upon being able to dominate a united Scandinavia by military pressure upon the southern provinces of Denmark. Accordingly he directed his Minister of Police to insert in the official *Journal de*

l'Empire of 17th June an article advocating the claims of the King of Denmark to the vacant succession.

Two days after the publication of this article a Swedish King's Messenger arrived at Paris, carrying the following letter dated 2nd June to the Emperor Napoleon :—

“ THE KING OF SWEDEN TO THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON.

“ MY BROTHER AND COUSIN,—Both I and my kingdom have just sustained the most terrible of blows, through the unexpected death of my beloved son, H. R. H. the Prince Royal of Sweden. He had by his rare qualities won the love of my people. Sweden . . . sees itself suddenly thrown back into a situation, in which the present offers no guarantee for the future beyond the uncertain duration of my life. . . . In whom can I better trust than in your Imperial and Royal Majesty who has so many claims upon my confidence and upon the gratitude of all good Swedes? . . . I am obliged to summon the Diet to meet in mid-July to decide the important question of the succession to the throne. . . . It is of great importance that I should receive a reply from your Imperial and Royal Majesty before the Diet meets. I must say frankly that my people do not wish to experience the inconvenience of a long minority, and the wishes of the Diet incline to a Prince who is of an age which renders him capable of succeeding me in the event of my death, and possesses children whose existence assure the continuance of the dynasty. If, as I am glad to think, the maintenance of intimate relations between Sweden and Denmark accord with your Imperial and Royal Majesty's political views, might not this object be attained by the election of the Duke of Augustenburg, brother-in-law of the King of Denmark, who has three children, two of whom are sons aged 12 and 10 respectively? Being a brother of the Prince whom Sweden has just lost, he will succeed him in the love of my subjects, who will see in his children a pledge of security for the future. I desire eagerly to receive the advice of your Imperial and Royal Majesty on that point; and I rejoice to think that you will not, in such a

critical moment, abandon a loyal and generous nation, attached to France by sympathy and affection, which counts confidently on your Imperial and Royal Majesty's support, and is ready to sacrifice anything except her independence, her traditions, and her laws.

"CHARLES, King of Sweden."

The Swedish Minister in Paris was Baron Lagerbielke. On receipt of the King's letter, he requested an audience, and was received by the Emperor at St. Cloud on the evening of 20th June. The Emperor, who had just risen from dinner, proposed a walk in the garden, where a conversation ensued, which, after a few polite preliminaries, turned naturally to the question of the vacant succession to the Swedish throne. In view of his connection with the Russian Emperor the candidature of the Prince of Oldenburg was soon disposed of, and the conversation passed on to the merits of the other candidates. The Emperor showed himself decidedly disposed to support the King of Denmark. The Minister, on the other hand, pointed out that the King of Denmark would be utterly unacceptable to Swedish opinion. Sweden was well aware of that King's ambitious designs, and was determined to maintain its independence, and not to be absorbed by any of its neighbours. He went on to suggest that the political interests of Denmark and Sweden would be served by the election of the Duke of Augustenburg, who was married to a sister of the King of Denmark. He added that it was in that direction that the inclination of the King of Sweden lay, and that the King wished to be justified by the Emperor's opinion. He laid stress on the circumstance that the Duke was the father of two sons, which offered some security for the succession to the throne.

"That is a strong point," said Napoleon. "But are there not other candidates who deserve to be considered. Let us speak frankly. Has not the son of the late King

(Gustavus IV) many friends in Sweden? Is he not remembered among the common people?"

"I shall not conceal from your Majesty," said the Minister, "that during the last Diet there were some individuals, who seemed to have a leaning towards the Prince Gustavus; and I cannot say that he is altogether forgotten. . . . But reasons of State prevailed. I shall say nothing about a matter which has been much discussed.¹ A more serious point is the danger of a long minority. . . . Besides, his father is only thirty-two. When the boy, who is eleven, reaches majority at the age of eighteen, his father will be about forty. There will be grave danger of intrigues in favour of a father deposed, expatriated, and in the flower of his age."

"Yes," said the Emperor. "Forty. That is the prime of life. At least I feel bound to say so.² . . . I see that it will be the Prince of Augustenburg."

"That," said Baron Lagerbielke, "is the direction of the King's wishes. He will deem himself fortunate, if Your Majesty shares his opinion."

As a result of this interview the Emperor saw very plainly that the King of Denmark, who was his own choice, was an impossible candidate, and the young Prince Gustavus, who had attracted the sympathy of his step-daughter, Queen Hortense, and of his sister, Princess Pauline, would not be acceptable in Sweden. He was no less opposed than the Swedish Government to a Russo-phil Duke of Oldenburg. Nobody remained except the Duke of Augustenburg, in whom he took no interest whatever. Under these circumstances his concern in the election languished sensibly; and he did no more than write a polite letter to the Swedish King which committed him to nothing.

¹ Doubtless he refers to the prevalent notion that Gustavus IV was illegitimate and was not really a Vasa.

² Napoleon was in his forty-first year in June 1810.

While the King of Sweden was identifying himself with the candidature of the Duke of Augustenburg, a popular party was forming itself in Sweden, the members of which were dissatisfied with the idea of inviting a mere figurehead to the vacant heritage of their throne. "We want a man, we want a soldier," became their motto. Their search for a man and a soldier naturally led them towards the entourage of Napoleon. "If the Emperor of the French would only give us one of his Kings," said one of them, "Sweden would be saved." "Sweden is lost," said Count Fersen, when told of the Prince Royal's death, "unless we choose one of the Marshals of France."

In truth Sweden had sunk under the weak and fatuous leadership of the eccentric Gustavus IV, into the lowest abysses of misery at home and of degradation abroad. The glory, which had illuminated so many pages of her past history, had become a reproach. The Russian Chancellor had passed a judgment upon her lamentable plight which was not wide of the mark. "Sweden," he said, "is in the agony of death, nothing remains but to let her die in peace." But the Swedes had not given themselves up to despair. Many of them had been dreaming of a revival of national prestige and prosperity. Their imagination was captivated by the idea of choosing among the Marshals of the Empire a Prince Royal who would regenerate their country and restore her ancient reputation for valour, glory, and heroism.

Of all the Marshals of France the one who was most favourably known in Northern Europe was Bernadotte, Prince of Ponte Corvo. As Governor of Hanover, and afterwards as Governor of the Hanseatic Towns, he had made his mark as an administrator. At the taking of Lübeck he had been noted for his humanity towards the inhabitants and his clemency towards his Swedish prisoners.¹ He had distinguished himself as commander

¹ See Chapter xv. xxv, and xxxi. *supra*.

of an army corps on the Baltic shores in the Polish Campaign of 1807. In the campaign against Sweden in 1808 he had observed the courtesies which he declared "to be due to those ancient allies of France." Public interest was attracted to him by his amazing career, by his chivalrous bearing, and by his picturesque personality. Among Bernadotte's warmest partisans were Count Gustave Mörner, the Commander of the Swedish prisoners at Lübeck, and his kinsman, Baron Otto Mörner, a Lieutenant of the Utland Regiment of Infantry, who, as King's Messenger, was the bearer of the letter of Charles XIII to the Emperor Napoleon.

We learn from the memoirs of the Swedish Count Suremain that the writer in June 1810 stayed at the country house of Count Gustave Mörner, with whom he discussed the question of the hour. "In truth," said Mörner, "in the position in which we find ourselves, I believe it would be best to choose a French General, for example the Prince of Ponte Corvo." "But," replied Suremain in a tone of surprise, "if we were to choose a French General, at least the choice should fall upon someone who is regarded with favour by Napoleon, for example the Viceroy of Italy (Eugène Beauharnais)." "Oh," said Mörner, "he would not come to Sweden. His prospects are too good."¹

Count Gustave Mörner followed up this conversation by helping to organise a party in Sweden in favour of Marshal Bernadotte. But nothing would have come of his advocacy of the Marshal's claims, if his young kinsman, the King's Messenger, had not taken up the cause of the Marshal in Paris with almost incredible vigour and daring.

¹ *Suremain* par Ernouf.

CHAPTER XLII

HOW BERNADOTTE BECAME A CANDIDATE FOR THE SUCCESSION TO THE THRONE OF SWEDEN.

JUNE 25-28, 1810

"As for the Marshal Prince of Ponte Corvo . . . he is a Prince highly to be commended for his excellent qualities, his talents, his valour, and his experience. He enjoys in this country general regard and esteem."

The Swedish Minister in Paris, June 1810.

AT the interview between Napoleon and Baron Lagerbielke there had been no suggestion of a French candidate for the vacant succession to the Swedish throne. No such idea had occurred either to the Emperor or to the Minister. Perhaps the idea would never have taken any serious shape, if it had not been for the energy and initiative which were displayed by Baron Otto Mörner, the young King's Messenger who has already been mentioned.

Having delivered the King's letter at the Swedish Legation in Paris, young Baron Mörner's duties as King's Messenger were at an end. He had formerly been an Aide-de-Camp of Count Wrede, a Swedish General, who, having come to Paris as Envoy Extraordinary to congratulate Napoleon on his second marriage, had discharged his mission, and was about to return to Sweden. Young Mörner called upon his former Chief, and attached himself to him; but he held no official position of any kind. His status was that of a foreign nobleman spending a few spare days in Paris—nothing more. The young Baron did not, however, give himself up to the gaieties of the French Capital. He betook himself to King-making.

It appears that young Mörner went to a friend named

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Lapie, a clerk in the French Foreign Office. Together they ransacked all the names that figured in the Imperial Almanac, with the result that they came to the conclusion that Swedish public opinion was rightly directed, and that the Marshal who would best fit the occasion was Bernadotte, Prince of Ponte Corvo. What seemed to have impressed them—besides his reputation as a soldier and administrator—was the circumstance that he was *apparenté* to the Imperial Family, and yet was noted for his independence in his relations with the Emperor. Lapie described him very happily as “a personage who participated in the prestige of the Napoleonic *régime* without being regarded as the servile instrument of the Emperor’s policy.”

Mörner’s next step was to obtain an introduction to the Prince of Ponte Corvo, which he succeeded in doing through M. Signeul, the Swedish Consul-General in France. Bernadotte welcomed him cordially as a kinsman of his old friend the prisoner of Lübeck. The young Lieutenant unfolded his proposals, representing that he was the interpreter of a large and influential body of public opinion, and assuring the Marshal that, if he should come forward as a candidate, the Swedish nation would be proud to see him at their head. Bernadotte desired nothing better than to be a King; but he was not put off his guard. In the year 1810 there was nothing bizarre in such a proposal. The ascent to a throne seemed to be no more than the topmost rung of the ladder of a Marshal’s ambition. Napoleon seemed to beckon his subordinates to the heights to which he had himself climbed. It was of climbers such as Bernadotte that Berenger wrote: “*Nul n’est content d’un chapeau, chacun voudrait une couronne.*”

Bernadotte received his visitor’s advances with a polite profession of admiration for the Swedish King and nation, and of his own unworthiness of such a high destiny. He said nothing that could be construed as a

refusal, but was careful from the very start to lay down two conditions. He declared that he did not regard it as possible that such an offer would ever be made to him, but that, in any event, he would not accept it without the approval of the Emperor, and without being assured that it represented the real wishes of the King of Sweden.

Baron Mörner, who was not discouraged by his reception, followed up his visit to Bernadotte by writing him the following letter :—

“BARON OTTO MÖRNER TO THE PRINCE OF PONTE CORVO.

“PARIS, 25th June 1810.

“MY PRINCE,—Your modesty cannot shake my opinion, which I believe will be that of the wisest of my compatriots. Sweden does not need a Dane, or a Russian, or a boy whose long minority would do us an injury. These are the lines upon which I shall speak whether it be to my Sovereign or to the Diet. I shall declare both to one and to the other that our country requires a Frenchman who will adopt our religion, who is known for his talents, for his courage, and for the esteem in which he is held by the august Emperor of France; who belongs to the Emperor’s family, being brother-in-law of the King of Spain; who has a son who will be able to replace his father without a regency, when Providence so ordains. I do not think that I am mistaken in anticipating that this view will be generally adopted, unless your great Emperor has other intentions as regards your future. But, if his wishes accord with those of the great majority of Swedes, and also of the army, he will render them a service which will place them under a lasting obligation to him. At all events, nothing will prevent me from expressing my own personal opinion to the Diet; and whatever may result, I shall have the satisfaction of having done my duty, and of having had no other object in view than to serve my country, and to render a just homage to your merits.—I am, with the most profound respect, Your Highness’s very humble and obedient servant,

“BARON OTTO MÖRNER.”¹

¹ *H. H.*, 55.

Baron Mörner next set himself to gain the support of his distinguished countryman, Count Wrede, who was on the point of leaving Paris, and had been received at a farewell audience by the Emperor. When young Mörner told him of the feeling in Sweden, and of his interview with the Marshal, Count Wrede, who was a soldier and a man of spirit, was easily won over; but he felt embarrassed by the circumstance that he had already spoken to the Emperor in favour of the Duke of Augustenburg, and he was puzzled what to think or how to act. As Bernadotte happened to have sent Count Wrede a pair of pistols as a farewell gift, he availed himself of the opportunity of calling to thank the Marshal, who at once told him of Baron Mörner's propositions and asked his opinion. Count Wrede told him that while the Baron was an irresponsible and enthusiastic young man, he was the interpreter of a genuine patriotic sentiment, and that, if the Marshal were to become a candidate, he would unite a great deal of support.

Count Wrede mentioned to Bernadotte three objections which were likely to be raised to his candidature, namely, his religion, his ignorance of the Swedish language, and his rumoured disagreements with the Emperor. Bernadotte replied that, as regards the religious question, he "was born in the country of Henri IV and was prepared to do what Henri IV had done." He also alluded to some Huguenot family connections on his mother's side. He added that he hoped to overcome the language difficulty; and he assured the Count that his relations with the Emperor were no longer such as had been represented. Count Wrede gave the Marshal as much encouragement as was possible under the circumstances, and asked him to explain to the Emperor his (Wrede's) change of view.

On 26th June Bernadotte had informed Napoleon of Baron Mörner's visits and of his representations.

The Emperor, in view of the letter which he had received from the Swedish King, and of his interview with the Swedish Minister, was not disposed to regard the matter seriously. As neither the Swedish King nor the Swedish Minister had mentioned Bernadotte, the idea of his candidature appeared to be mere moonshine, and he had given it no encouragement. But Bernadotte now returned to the charge, fortified by his conversation with Count Wrede. In the following letter he informed the Emperor of the new turn which events had taken :—

"THE PRINCE OF PONTE CORVO TO THE EMPEROR.

"27th June 1810.

"SIRE,—Yesterday morning after I left Your Majesty, General Wrede came to see me, and spoke as follows. He said: 'When the Emperor deigned to give me my last audience, I spoke to him as was my duty, according to the mission which had been confided to me. The view which I expressed on behalf of the King was not exactly the wish of his heart, but the one which circumstances had determined him to adopt. Since my audience events have taken another direction. The opinion of the nation has pronounced in your favour if the Emperor Napoleon deigns to consent, and it would be in that sense that my conscience could oblige me to speak to the Emperor, if I had again the honour to approach him. I beg of you, my Prince, to justify me to the Emperor if you have the opportunity, and to tell him, that having ceased to hold the office of Ambassador, I wish to join my compatriots in expressing the hope that His Majesty will deign to regard us with favour.'

"I replied to General Wrede that I belonged entirely to Your Majesty, and that I had no other desire or wish than to obey you, and that this proposal, which was so unexpected by me, flows solely from Your Majesty's great renown, which exalts far and wide the least of those servants, among whom I shall always be happy to be included. Hardly had General Wrede left me than I received the enclosed letter, which I had the

honour to submit to Your Majesty. The writer has just come from Sweden, and is well known to Count Wrede, whose Aide-de-Camp he was.

"Having arrived at my country house on my way to Plombières, I considered it my duty to give Your Majesty this my latest information. I entreat Your Majesty to believe that in doing so, I am animated by the same motives which induced me to wait upon Your Majesty yesterday morning, that is to say, by my duty to my Sovereign and the most absolute devotion to his person.—I am, with the most profound respect, Your Majesty's humble and obedient servant,

"J. BERNADOTTE,
Marshal of the Empire. Prince
of Ponte Corvo." ¹

On the following day, Baron Mörner returned to Sweden. After his departure Count Wrede made a clean breast of the whole affair to the Swedish Minister, Baron Lagerbielke, whose surprise and consternation on receiving this confidence is evidenced by the contents of his next letter to the Foreign Secretary:—

"BARON LAGERBIEKE, SWEDISH MINISTER AT PARIS,
TO BARON D'ENGESTRÖM, FOREIGN SECRETARY OF
STATE AT STOCKHOLM.

"PARIS, 30th June 1810.

"BARON,—Although in my long experience I have witnessed the occurrence of many singular events, and have noticed with apprehension the spirit of madness and political folly of which some young Swedes are capable, I admit that I am stupefied at the incredible audacity of Baron Mörner. I feel glad that his departure relieves me of the necessity of considering how I should deal with him. . . . Two different questions have to be dealt with, and justice requires that they should not be confused. One is the astonishing proceeding of Baron Mörner; the other is the personality of Marshal the Prince of Ponte Corvo. As regards the first of these questions, nothing in my

¹ H. H., 56.

opinion justified it, and nothing can excuse it. . . . A Lieutenant of Infantry, acting as the secret Missionary of a Propaganda which he does not even name, takes it upon himself to dispose of the throne of Sweden and of the future destiny of his country! . . . As for the Marshal Prince of Ponte Corvo, the extreme irregularity of the proceedings which have put him forward does not prevent me from saying that he is a Prince highly to be commended for his excellent qualities, his talents, his valour, and his experience. He enjoys in this country general regard and esteem. It is true that the affair of the Saxons at the Battle of Wagram, and his famous Order of the Day on that occasion, embroiled him with the Emperor, and since his return from the army he has apparently not been employed. But for some time past he has regained the favour of his Sovereign, at least I judge so by the circumstance that the tone of *fronderie* which formerly existed in the circle of the Prince, to which Count Gustave Mörner could testify, no longer exists there.

"Nevertheless I hope that I am sufficiently well-known to Your Excellency and to His Majesty, to make it superfluous for me to add that under no circumstances will the Swedish Minister here have any other opinion than that of his Sovereign. . . . Your Excellency's very humble and obedient servant,

"GUSTAVUS LAGERBIELKE." ¹

Young Mörner's audacity was condemned by the Swedish King as well as by the Court and the Government. On his return to Stockholm he was placed under arrest, and, on his release from detention, was ordered to return to garrison duty at the depot of his regiment.² Thenceforward he abstained from active participation in the election. But he had set the ball rolling. He had translated the vague desire for "a man and a soldier," which pervaded the public mind, into the serious adoption of a popular candidate.³

¹ *H. H.*, 62, 63. ² *H. H.*, 110, 111. ³ *Suremain*, par Ernouf, 257.

When he heard of his arrest, Bernadotte wrote to the young man :—

“ THE PRINCE OF PONTE CORVO TO BARON OTTO
MÖRNER

“ I have heard with much pain, Baron, of the annoyances to which you have been subjected on my account. I feel too much concerned, not to take every means in my power of putting an end to them. Be persuaded that I shall lose no opportunity of proving to you the sincerity of the sentiments with which I shall always remain, Baron, your affectionate friend,

“ J. BERNADOTTE,
Prince of Ponte Corvo.”¹

Was there ever such a daring young King-maker as Baron Otto Mörner, Lieutenant of the Upland Regiment? But there was a great deal to happen before his King was made.

¹ *H. H.*, 252. Bernadotte proved the sincerity of his sentiment at a later date by appointing the Baron to be Viceroy of Norway.

CHAPTER XLIII

HOW NAPOLEON CAME ROUND TO BERNADOTTE'S CANDIDATURE

JUNE 28-JULY 21, 1810

"L'Empereur fut séduit par la gloire de voir un Maréchal de France devenir roi ; une femme à laquelle il s'intéressait reine ; et une filleul prince Royal."—MONTHOLON, *Notes et Mélanges*, i. 219.

THE Swedish Minister in Paris remarked in one of his despatches that the reserved attitude which Napoleon maintained towards the question of the Swedish succession offered a striking contrast to the dictatorial methods which he had adopted in the case of other nations. The explanation of his astonishing moderation is not far to seek. Although he was by no means cured of his king-making propensity, he had been rendered cautious by experience. He had observed how disastrous might be the consequences of attempting to put a King over a people without regard to the capacity of the King, or to the wishes of the people. In Spain he had seen the consequences of provoking national sentiment, and he had no wish to involve himself in another Peninsular War. In Holland his brother Louis was teaching him how thankless a task it was to prop up an artificial monarchy.

So far as Sweden was concerned there were special reasons which restrained the Emperor from any notion of using pressure, dictation, or force. He wished to avoid a quarrel with Russia, which he knew would be the result of any direct interference in the dynastic arrangements of Sweden. Besides, he was not in touch with Swedish politics or with Swedish public opinion, and he was afraid of risking an adventure which might end

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in a *coup manqué*. Nevertheless, when he became aware that advances had been made to one of his Marshals from a Swedish quarter, the idea of a French candidate for the vacant succession began to attract him, with the result that he set in motion his Foreign Minister, the Duke of Cadore, as well as his Minister of Police, the Duke of Rovigo, whose function it was to control the press and to guide public opinion.

The Swedish Minister found himself placed in a delicate position by Baron Mörner's electioneering activities. The two most important persons in Paris, so far as Sweden was concerned, were Count Wrede, and M. Signeul, the Consul General; and they had suddenly taken up the cause of the Marshal. In the meantime the King of Sweden had instructed his Minister to support the Duke of Augustenburg; and the Minister had so informed the Emperor, and had purported to give His Imperial Majesty all the information at his disposal, without ever mentioning a French candidate, still less the Prince of Ponte Corvo.

Under these circumstances Baron Lagerbielke was anxious to find an opportunity of explaining himself to the Duke of Cadore. The opportunity occurred at a social entertainment which, on account of its tragical termination, became historical. On Sunday, 1st July, Prince Schwarzenberg, the Austrian Field Marshal, who had come to Paris as Envoy on the occasion of the Emperor's marriage to the Arch-Duchess Marie Louise, gave a ball in honour of the Empress. A temporary ballroom, which was constructed in the garden, is described by a leader of the Parisian Society of that day as a "fairy palace," and "a scene of Oriental enchantment." In the middle of a dance the fairy palace was enveloped in flames, and the scene of enchantment became a scene of terror. The hostess and several of her guests were burned to death.

At this ball the Swedish Minister obtained his first

interview with the Duke of Cadore in reference to the Swedish succession. The Foreign Minister and the Swedish diplomat left the ballroom, and in the seclusion of an ante-room discussed the situation. Before the conversation had proceeded beyond a few guarded phrases, it was interrupted by cries of "Fire." The Duke and the Minister were only just in time to cross the gallery and gain the garden before the conflagration became general.¹

A few days afterwards a second interview took place between the Duke of Cadore and Baron Lagerbielke which was followed by others. The successive changes in Napoleon's attitude of mind were reflected in the Duke of Cadore's conversations. It is evident that for the next three weeks the Emperor wavered from day to day. At first he failed to appreciate the strength of Bernadotte's personal reputation and following in Sweden, and he was disposed to look about for a French Prince nearer to himself, who would be more dependable from his own point of view.

Metternich says that the Emperor thought of transferring Murat from Naples to Sweden, his brother Jerome from Westphalia to Naples, and his brother Louis (who was giving trouble in Holland) to Westphalia.² There is no trace elsewhere of his having seriously contemplated such a drastic re-shuffling of his Court cards. When he spoke in that sense to Metternich, he must have been giving expression to a passing fancy. But there can be no doubt that for several days he thought of putting forward his stepson, Eugène Beauharnais, until the Empress Marie Louise raised the question of religion. On hearing that, if a Frenchman should accept the vacant succession, he would have to adopt the Lutheran faith, she exclaimed: "What! would the wretch give up his God for a crown? None

¹ *H. H.*, 84 (Lagerbielke's despatch of 5th July 1810).

² Metternich, ii. 433 (despatch of 9th July 1810).

of my family would ever have consented to such a thing." The Emperor was much impressed by this remark of his young bride's, and quickly made up his mind that he would not further entertain the idea of putting forward a member of his family.

While Eugène Beauharnais' name was on the tapis, Baron Lagerbielke wrote as follows about him to the Swedish King; "I do not think that he would suit Sweden. He is gentle and good. His appearance and manners are very agreeable. But he does not seem to be a man of strong character; and, although he has had great opportunities, he does not appear to have developed any distinguished talents. His wife (a Princess of Bavaria) is charming. If there exists a model of perfection it is she." It was said that Eugène himself had no desire to go to Sweden, and that he expressed himself as follows: "I am satisfied with my present position. In France and in Italy I have been able to render services, and to acquire the right to public esteem. I have done nothing for Sweden. I am a stranger to their customs and to their language. It is uncertain whether I should be successful in such a position. Besides, I should have to change my religion. I am not disposed to do so, and my wife, who belongs to one of the most ancient Catholic Houses in Germany (the reigning House of Bavaria), would not consent to such a change either for herself or for her children." He also alleged a repugnance to profiting by the displacement of the young Prince Gustavus, whose mother was a sister of the Queen of Bavaria, and in that way the aunt of his wife.¹ It is curious that the only two Frenchmen who had any serious chance of election to the Swedish throne were Bernadotte and Eugène, and that Bernadotte's son afterwards married Eugène's daughter, with the result that the present dynasty descends from their offspring.

¹ *Suremain*, par Ernouf, 260.

It was probably in view of the Emperor's interest in Eugène Beauharnais that we find the Duke of Cadore on the 4th July asking the Swedish Minister for the second time whether it was essential according to the Swedish Constitution that the King should belong to the Lutheran religion. On the Minister replying in the affirmative, the Duke of Cadore observed: "Ah! well, perhaps that would not present an insurmountable difficulty." This is explained in a despatch of Metternich's of 8th July in which he says that Napoleon had told him that "the question of religion would be an insurmountable objection in one of his family, but that a Marshal would not mind so much."¹

The Emperor took steps to sound the Swedish Minister about some other Frenchmen who would be more dependable than Bernadotte. We find the Minister of Police, the Duke of Rovigo, suggesting to Lagerbielke the names of three other Marshals who were Princes of the Empire. These were the Prince of Neuchatel (Berthier), the Prince of Essling (Masséna), and the Prince of Eckmühl (Davout). The Swedish Minister adds: "He spoke very well of the Prince of Ponte Corvo, but he did not seem in the least to prefer him to the others, probably on account of their personal relations. Indeed, I think that a man of the character of the Prince of Ponte Corvo would not be intimate with the Duke of Rovigo."² This was rather severe on the Duke of Rovigo. At all events, we do not find that any other Marshal than Bernadotte was ever in the running. There can be no doubt that the Emperor would have preferred Berthier, but he does not seem to have gone so far as to submit his name to the Swedish Government.

The Emperor soon found out that behind Bernadotte's candidature there was a volume of personal esteem which was larger than he had imagined. The Duke of

¹ Metternich, *Autobiography*, ii. 433 (despatch of 9th July 1810).

² *H. H.*, 99 (Lagerbielke's despatch of 10th July 1810).

Cadore had asked the Swedish Minister whether the Prince of Ponte Corvo had many supporters in Sweden especially among men of mark. Baron Lagerbielke had replied to the effect that his information was not up to date, as the question of the Succession was not on the tapis when he left home but that it was possible that the laudable conduct of Bernadotte at Hamburg and in Hanover was known and appreciated in Sweden, and that a grateful remembrance of him had been preserved among the Swedish prisoners of Lübeck.¹

Bernadotte's change of religion need not be discussed here, because the subject has been dealt with in a note to another volume.² He afterwards showed a disposition to take the change seriously, and referred more than once to impressions which came from his mother's Huguenot connections, and from his association with the Lutherans of Anspach. His first thoughts, when the offer came to him, are represented by the reply which he gave, when questioned on the subject by Count Wrede: "I was born in the country of Henri IV, and I feel capable of doing that which Henri IV did not hesitate to do." Perhaps he had in his mind Henri IV's naive excuse: "*Paris valait bien la messe*," and said to himself that "*Stockholm valait bien la confession d'Augsburg*." His wife Désirée, as became her Irish descent, did not follow her husband's example; and, if the Crown of Sweden had been conditional upon a change of religion on her part, it may be safely said that Bernadotte would never have become a King.

In the second week in July a new French candidate appeared on the scene, as the result of one of those political eruptions in which the volcanic activities of Napoleon's era so often found an outlet. In the early days of July, the Emperor's brother, Louis Bonaparte, weary of his inglorious position as the titular King of a

¹ *H. H.*, 85 (Lagerbielke's despatch of 5th July 1810).

² *Bernadotte, The First Phase*, 484.



HORTENSE DE BEAUHARNAIS
Queen of Holland



LOUIS BONAPARTE
King of Holland

French satrapy, abdicated his throne, and Napoleon on 9th July annexed Holland to the French Empire. Napoleon was much attached to Louis's wife, Queen Hortense, who was at once his step-daughter and his sister-in-law. He had taken a warm interest in her eldest boy, and had intended to make him heir of all his greatness. The child's death and his own second marriage had changed the current of his thoughts upon that subject; but Queen Hortense had two other sons, both of tender years, Napoleon-Louis, and Louis-Napoleon, the latter of whom afterwards became Napoleon the Third. Much sympathy was felt for these children; and the idea occurred to their sympathisers and to Napoleon himself, that the vacant succession in Sweden offered an opportunity for providing for one of them. On the 19th July the Duke of Rovigo sent a trusted lieutenant,¹ to the Swedish Minister, who described the interview in a letter to his Sovereign:—

BARON LAGERBIELKE TO KING CHARLES XIII

"Through the mist of certain vague phrases, and in spite of the pretext which he made of coming to pay his homage to Your Majesty, I soon discovered that his mission was to sound me upon the subject of the Prince Royal of Holland. I thought it my duty to hold out no hope of success in that direction. I explained to him that such a selection would be in contravention of the wise reasons which had motived the exclusion of the young Prince Gustavus Vasa (*i.e.*, the danger of a long minority with its accompanying inconveniences, such as a regency). He then referred to the Prince of Ponte Corvo and loaded him with praise."²

This was the last attempt to put forward any other French candidate than Bernadotte. There seems to be

¹ M. Esmenard, Literary Censor of the Police Department, who is said to have been from time to time an intermediary of intrigue between Fouché and Metternich. Guillon, 153.

H. H., 114 (Lagerbielke's despatch of 20th July 1810).

no trace after 19th July of any other French name being seriously considered either by the Emperor or by the Swedes. The Emperor, who had received the first suggestions of Bernadotte's candidature with incredulity, now began to realise that it was favourably regarded by the representative Swedes in Paris. He was debarred by motives of policy and prudence from intervening officially; but it seems that, as soon as he had made up his mind that Bernadotte had a chance of winning the Swedish succession without his own active and official intervention, he could not resist the temptation of wishing and working *sub rosa* for the elevation of a French Prince of his own making. The prospect of seeing one of his Marshals elected a King appealed to his inveterate love of King-making, and accorded with his manner of thinking *à la Charlemagne*.

The Swedish Minister at a later date summed up his judgment upon Napoleon's mental attitude towards Bernadotte's candidature in the following words, and he was not far wrong: "I know that the Emperor has not thought of the Prince of Ponte Corvo as one whom he would choose for the accomplishment of his own designs (because he knows the noble and independent character of the Prince), but as one in whose favour there is the best chance of uniting the votes of the Diet."¹

Napoleon, having come to this conclusion, took the first opportunity of declaring himself. Such an opportunity was easily found, because Bernadotte was looking for a suitable occasion of ascertaining where he stood. On 21st July the Emperor, remarking the Marshal at his *levée*, said to him in the hearing of his *entourage*: "Well, have you any news from Sweden?" Bernadotte, instead of answering the question, came forward and asked the Emperor to tell him frankly whether his election to the Swedish succession would be consistent with His Imperial Majesty's policy, adding that, unless

¹ *H. H.*, 248 (Lagerbielke's despatch of 17th August 1810).

assured that it would not be inconsistent with the Emperor's policy, he (Bernadotte) would prevent any further steps being taken in his favour. The Emperor replied: "Do nothing of the kind. Let things take their course. It is consistent with my policy and with that of Sweden that you should be placed there."¹

The Emperor then explained his own reasons for not exercising any public or official influence upon the election. His remarks, which must be taken *cum grano* because they were intended to be repeated to the Swedish Minister, were to the following effect: "I have perfect confidence in the sentiments of the King of Sweden and of the enlightened statesmen who surround him, and I should have no difficulty in coming to an understanding with them. But I have no means of ascertaining with certainty the sentiments of the Diet, a body the composition of which varies from time to time. It would not be surprising to find an opposition in the Diet, based upon commercial interests, although I do not think that their commercial interests would suffer by the election of a French candidate. Besides, the Swedish nation is proud of its independence and is somewhat exalted in its ideas just at present. They might be wounded by the exercise on my part of any ostensible influence. If I once take up a decided position publicly I must go forward and carry it through *coûte que coûte*. If I were to fail it would be the first sign of the decadence of my political power. It would be a slap in the face, which would make it difficult for me to know what course to take. If I allow you to listen to proposals, which, as everyone knows, you could not entertain without my authority, I am allowing my attitude to be understood, without exposing myself to the risk of a *coup manqué*. Even if I were to take up a strong stand, and to carry the matter through by

¹ H. H., 263 (Lagerbielke's despatch of 22nd August 1810, describing a conversation of the previous 21st July).

surprise or assault, you would be left in a precarious situation and you could not count upon my help under all circumstances. If your position in Sweden is to be a sound, enduring, and honourable one, it must be gained without outside influence, even if it is obtained by the majority of one vote only. In that event you will arrive in Sweden as a Swede, and will be enabled to maintain yourself by your talent and by your loyal conduct."¹ These remarks of Napoleon were intended as a political pronouncement, and were reported to the Swedish Minister at a later date, but they do not mention one of Napoleon's principal motives for reserve, namely, his disinclination to precipitate a rupture with Russia.

After this interview Napoleon interested himself stealthily but warmly in Bernadotte's candidature; and, in the course of the next few days, steps were taken which had a decisive consequence. Why did the Emperor abandon himself to such a serious leap in the dark? It was not for love of Bernadotte. It was not for reasons of State. At St. Helena he told Montholon that he was "*séduit par la gloire de voir un Maréchal de France devenir roi; une femme à laquelle il s'intéressait reine; et un filleul Prince Royal.*"² In pursuit of this will-o'-the-wisp, Napoleon lost sight of his star.

¹ *H. H.*, 263, 264.

² Montholon, *Notes et Mélanges*, i. 219.

CHAPTER XLIV

THE EMPEROR RECALLS HIS CHARGE D'AFFAIRES AT STOCKHOLM; AND BERNADOTTE EMPLOYS AN ELECTION AGENT

JUNE-JULY 1810

"I cannot tell you how indignant I feel at the despatch of M. Desaugiers (French *Chargé d'Affaires* at Stockholm). . . . My intention is that you will immediately recall him."—*Napoleon to his Foreign Minister, July 1810.*

"I believe that he (M. Fournier) is entrusted with an important mission."—*The Swedish Consul-General in Paris to the Swedish Foreign Minister, July 1810.*

NAPOLEON, as soon as he had satisfied himself that Bernadotte was the only competitor "in the French stable" that had a chance of winning the Swedish prize, instructed his Foreign Minister to give a covert but effective support to his candidature.

Bernadotte had organised, through his old friends at Hamburg, a special system of express post by *estafettes*. The Swedish Minister tells us that the Marshal was incredibly well informed about everything that was going on in Sweden. He became aware of important events before they reached the Swedish Legation. Baron Lagerbielke was mystified when he found that the Duke of Cadore was much better, and more promptly, "posted up" about what was happening at Stockholm and at Orebro than the Swedish Minister himself.¹ In this way Bernadotte, and through him the Duke of Cadore, became aware that the French *Chargé d'Affaires* at Stockholm, M. Desaugiers, misled by the article which the Emperor had directed to be inserted in the *Journal de l'Empire*,² had not only come forward as a

¹ H. H., 262.

² See pp. 251, 252, *supra*.

partisan of the King of Denmark, but had actively opposed Bernadotte's candidature, declaring that if a Frenchman were to be selected, a more suitable one might be found than the Marshal who had been under a cloud since the Battle of Wagram.

On the 25th July Napoleon, having been informed of Desaugiers' proceedings through Bernadotte's postal service, and finding the facts confirmed by a despatch from Desaugiers himself, fired off the following letter to the Duke of Cadore: "DUKE OF CADORE,—I cannot express to you how indignant I feel at the despatch of M. Desaugiers. I do not know what instructions can have led that envoy to suppose that he was authorised to indulge in extravagant statements. My intention is that you will immediately recall him." The Duke at once sent a peremptory despatch recalling Desaugiers, and notified the Swedish Minister that he had done so.¹

Meanwhile Bernadotte had engaged the services of an unofficial agent to represent his interests, to organise the energies of his supporters, and to counteract those of his opponents. There is a business side to almost every candidature; and experience proves that, however spontaneous and sincere may be the enthusiasm of a candidate's supporters, there will be found somewhere behind the scenes an active department presided over by a hard-headed election agent. The election of the successor to the throne of Sweden was no exception to this general rule. Stockholm and Orebro doubtless swarmed with agents, Russians, Danes, and Holsteiners. It was necessary for Bernadotte to have his agent also; and the person selected for that post was a M. Fournier, a French merchant, and an ex-Vice Consul of France at the Swedish port of Gothenburg, where he had not been successful in business, but had made a certain reputation for cleverness and for enterprise.

¹ *H.H.*, 126-130 (Lagerbielke's despatch of 29th July 1810).

Fournier, who was probably chosen for this task by Signeul, the Swedish Consul General, prepared himself for his mission. He was primed with answers to all the questions which were likely to be raised by friends or enemies. He was furnished with portraits of the Marshal, of Princess Désirée, and of their handsome boy, Oscar, and with biographical sketches of the Marshal's campaigns and achievements. Last and not least, he was authorised, if any question should be asked as to the Prince's financial position and prospects, to give an assurance that, if he should be elected, he would not come to his adopted country in the character of a penniless adventurer. On the contrary, Bernadotte was prepared to advance, or to arrange an advance, to the Swedish Treasury of eight million francs (£320,000) at four *per cent.* interest; to liquidate certain claims which Swedish merchants had upon the French Government, in respect of which he was prepared to pay a million francs (£40,000) on his arrival in Sweden; and to exchange his own domains for Swedish domains which Napoleon had appropriated in Pomerania.

Fournier was instructed not to broach these financial questions unless they were raised. But he was to be ready with these assurances, if questions should be asked, and it was anticipated that such questions might be asked where a French Marshal was pitted against candidates who were reputed to have behind them respectively the treasuries of Russia and of Denmark.

Some of the best historians of the period have inferred that Napoleon was an entire stranger to Fournier's employment and mission. This is exactly the impression which Napoleon wished to create. But there can be little doubt that the Emperor knew all about Fournier's mission, and that he authorised the Duke of Cadore to help it forward. Fournier was not only furnished with a letter of introduction to the Swedish Foreign Minister from Signeul, the Consul General, which contained the

words, "I believe that he is entrusted with an important mission";¹ but he was also armed with a passport to which was attached the personal signature of the Duke of Cadore. Besides, as Bernadotte was not a man to make promises which he had no reason to suppose himself capable of carrying out, it is in the highest degree probable that he obtained an assurance from Napoleon, before Fournier's departure from Paris, that he might be able to count upon being able to give effect to the undertakings which Fournier was authorised to make.

Baron Lagerbielke, the Swedish Minister in Paris, was not let into the secret. We find him writing a letter on 27th July to the King dealing at length with M. Fournier's alleged private affairs, which were supposed to relate to a personal claim of the ex-Consul's for 70,000 rix-dollars against the Swedish Government. The Minister said nothing about M. Fournier's real mission, of which he had not been informed.² But, afterwards, when he became aware of the real object of Fournier's journey, he wrote the following report to his Government: "The mission of M. Fournier has not surprised me, but I am not disposed to think that his instructions emanated directly from the Emperor and his Minister. I am more inclined to believe that his errand proceeded immediately from the Prince of Ponte Corvo, although it was undertaken with the approbation of the Emperor, and was facilitated by his Minister."³

If it were necessary to find further proof of the connivance of the Emperor at Bernadotte's candidature, it is furnished by two documents of a later date. One of them was the postscript to Fournier's letter to Bernadotte, from Orebro, announcing the result of the election. The postscript concluded with these words: "I beg

¹ *H. H.*, 121, 122.

² *H. H.*, 122, 123 (Lagerbielke's despatch of 27th July 1810).

³ *H. H.*, 270 (Lagerbielke's despatch of 31st August 1810).

Your Royal Highness to forward the enclosed letter immediately to the Duke of Cadore."¹ The other was a note from Napoleon to the Minister of the Public Treasury, Count Mollien, written ten days after the news of Bernadotte's election reached Paris and a fortnight before Bernadotte's departure for Sweden:—

"COUNT MOLLIEU,—Give a million to the Prince of Ponte Corvo out of the Exchequer (*sur la caisse de service*). The matter shall be regularised at once (*cela sera regularisé ensuite*).
NAPOLEON."²

In order to prove the Emperor's complicity in Bernadotte's candidature we have anticipated some subsequent events. Let us retrace our steps in order to follow the course of the election contest at Orebro.

¹ *H. H.*, 253, 254 (Fournier's letter of 21st August 1810).

² *Corr. de Nap.*, 16906.

CHAPTER XLV

THE ELECTION AT OREBRO

JULY 25-AUGUST 15, 1810

"The Duke of Augustenburg gains friends every day. . . . The partisans of the Prince of Ponte Corvo, although still numerous, are much fewer than they were."—BARON D'ENGESTRÖM, *4th August*.

"The majority of the Diet was already for the Prince of Ponte Corvo. If the King decides for the Prince, which seems probable, the affair will present very little difficulty."—BARON D'ENGESTRÖM, *15th August*.

THE King, Charles XIII, arrived at Orebro on the 21st July; and on the 25th July the Diet assembled. The overwhelming majority of the party of the Court and the Council, prominent among whom were General Adlercreutz and Colonel Adlersparre, supported the King in his wish for the success of his cousin, the Duke of Augustenburg. They were not attracted by the prospect of being ruled over by a soldier of fortune, a Prince of plebeian origin with revolutionary antecedents. On the other hand, the Prince of Ponte Corvo was the people's candidate. His career and his personality appealed to the Army and to the masses. His was the only name that excited enthusiasm. It was applauded at public meetings and was toasted in the cabarets. The deputies from the Province of Ostrogothia, to which the Lübeck prisoners belonged, made themselves conspicuous by their praise and support of the Marshal.

The tactics of the Court party were cleverly devised and executed. They laid stress upon the danger of finding in the French Marshal an instrument of Napoleon's oppressive commercial policy, and of the invasion of Sweden by a crowd of French adventurers



PRINCE OSCAR BERNADOTTE



THE CASTLE OF OREBRO

and placehunters. Use was also made of the imprudent pronouncements of the French *Chargé d'Affaires*, Desaugiers, the news of whose recall had not yet reached Sweden. These pronouncements were quoted and circulated for the purpose of representing that Bernadotte had no support from his own Sovereign or from the French Government. As a result of these manœuvres the Foreign Minister was able on the 4th August to write as follows to the Swedish Minister in Paris:—

“BARON D'ENGESTRÖM TO BARON LAGERBIELKE.

“My despatches resemble the bulletins of a sick-room which vary according to the circumstances of the moment. . . . The Duke of Augustenburg gains friends every day, and he appears at present to be the candidate fixed upon by the great majority as heir to the throne. . . . The partisans of the Prince of Ponte Corvo, although still numerous, are much fewer than they were.”¹

Bernadotte's friends, finding themselves at a disadvantage, adopted the tactics of seeking cover behind some other candidate. For example, Count Wrede ostensibly supported the Duke of Oldenburg, well knowing that he had not the remotest chance of success. At the same time he praised Bernadotte wherever he went, in terms the tenor of which may be judged from the following letter:—

LETTER OF COUNT WREDE

“Do you wish to know my opinion of Marshal Bernadotte? I entertain for him a profound esteem, not only as a soldier and statesman, but as a private individual. *Vox populi, vox Dei*. Good father, good husband, faithful in his friendships, he is adored by those who form his entourage. A certain independence of character is probably the cause of the rumours of his disagreements with the Emperor. I have often seen

¹ *H. H.*, 145 (Despatch of 4th August 1810).

them together without ever remarking anything of the kind. Everybody knows the regard which Napoleon has for him. He is the only Frenchman I have found in Paris, for the other Generals have the German air, which is so stiff and disagreeable. To raise to the throne of Sweden a Prince without force of character and eminent qualities would be to degrade Sweden from the ranks of an independent nation. . . ."¹

In the second week of August, it looked as if the King and the Court party were carrying all before them. In the Secret Committee the Duke of Augustenburg was adopted by eleven votes to one, while in the Diet a preliminary vote showed 109 for the Duke, and 88 for the Prince of Ponte Corvo, who would have had to console himself with a *succès d'estime* and a second place, but for the sudden arrival of M. Fournier, the election agent, whose acquaintance we have made in the preceding chapter.

On 10th August, M. Fournier appeared on the scene. The fact that he had no official position enabled him to remain at Orebro, from which place all diplomatic envoys were excluded during the sittings of the Diet. Armed with his passport from the Duke of Cadore, and his letter of introduction from the Swedish Consul-General in France, he presented himself to the Swedish Foreign Minister, and assured him that the Emperor desired the success of the Prince of Ponte Corvo, but was prevented by reasons of high policy from openly expressing his wishes. Baron d'Engeström mooted the stock objections which formed the war-cries of the party to which he belonged. "The Marshal," he said, "does not know the Swedish language." "What matter," replied Fournier, "he will learn it at once." "He will bring with him a crowd of Frenchmen," said d'Engeström, "who will monopolise all our employments."

¹ *Les Suédois depuis Charles XII jusqu'à Oscar 1er*, par Vassy. page 336.

"Certainly not," replied Fournier. "He will be a blind follower of Napoleon's system," said the Minister, "and will take up a hostile attitude against England, which will have injurious consequences." "On the contrary," said Fournier, "he will seize every opportunity of developing your commerce."¹

Fournier having hinted that the Prince, if elected, would not come to Sweden empty-handed, but would be in a position to assist in relieving the financial difficulties of his adopted country, d'Engeström asked how? Fournier then gave the undertakings which he had been authorised to offer, saying that the Prince would respond to the confidence of the King and the Diet by offering to advance eight millions of francs at four *per cent.*, by discharging certain claims of Swedish merchants on the French Government to the extent of a million francs, and by exchanging his own domains for the Swedish domains which the Emperor had appropriated in what was then Swedish Pomerania.²

While d'Engeström was submitting the purport of this interview to the King and to the Secret Committee of the Diet, Fournier entered upon an active canvass. *Brochures* were circulated which described in glowing terms the Prince of Ponte Corvo's romantic career and military exploits. Fournier distributed portraits of the Prince, the Princess, and of Prince Oscar, one of which represented Bernadotte's handsome boy playing with his father's sword. These electioneering devices weighed heavily against the Duke of Augustenburg, a commonplace personage, whose son could hardly, by the wildest stretch of an artist's imagination, have been portrayed in the act of toying with the sabre of his sire.

Fournier made the most of his passport from the Duke of Cadore, and he let it be understood that, although the Emperor was restrained by policy from

¹ Schefer (citing d'Engeström), 21.

² *H. H.*, 199, 200 (D'Engeström's despatch to Lagerbielke, 15th August 1810).

making any formal declaration, he was desirous for the success of the French candidate. To the peasantry he enlarged upon the Marshal's valour and wealth. He reminded the middle classes that Bernadotte was one of themselves and would protect their commerce. To the clergy he spoke of the Prince's Huguenot connections. The nobles were the most difficult to persuade, but among those of them who belonged to the army he found plenty of adherents.¹

Laudatory poems were composed and distributed among the electors. One of them was to the following effect: "Let us proclaim Bernadotte. We are drawn to him as iron is drawn to the magnet. Sweden will revive under the shadow of his sword, as the arid earth revives under the refreshing summer shower. Come, Brave Hero. Come, friend of humanity! . . . Thou shalt be the living soul in the body of Sweden. We have chosen thee to be Prince of the North."²

Another leaflet in the form of a dialogue between A. and B. was passed from hand to hand, which represented the French Marshal as the personification of heroism and virtue. Some passages will suffice to illustrate its purport: "B.—I admit frankly that the Prince of Ponte Corvo, of whom there is so much talk, is unknown to me. Tell me something about him. A.—Willingly. You cannot be unaware that he sprang from the ranks of the people, and fought bravely in the cause of liberty. B.—Yes, I have heard that he carried the musket. A.—He did so for ten years; he fought in a hundred battles; and rose through every rank to that of Marshal. As Minister of War he rendered good services to his country. He created armies, as it were by enchantment. . . . Moderation in his hour of success, generosity to a defeated foe, paternal solicitude for his troops, these are the virtues which have won

¹ *Suremain*, par Ernouf, 264.

² *Geffroy, Révue des Deux Mondes*, xi, 1291.

immortal fame for this hero. *B.*—I see that he is a great man . . . but does Sweden want a hero? Sweden is poor and thinly populated. We have had heroes, and we know what they cost us. *A.*—The Prince of Ponte Corvo hates war. He regards it as the pest of humanity," etc., etc. In a similar strain *A.* answers all the objections of *B.*, who finally acknowledges himself convinced that the election of Bernadotte is essential to the happiness and prosperity of Sweden. ¹

The following letter, dated 18th August, from one of the Council of State to the Swedish Minister at Paris affords powerful evidence that M. Fournier's activities gave a decisive turn to the course of the election campaign:—

BARON WETTERSTEDT TO BARON LAGERBIELKE.

"The movement in favour of the Prince of Augustenburg begins to die away here in a remarkable way. You will learn from His Excellency's (Baron d'Engeström) despatch the details of the communications which have been made here by M. Fournier. They have nothing official to support them. They have not got even a single line in writing from the Prince of Ponte Corvo. He has nothing except a portrait of the Princess and another of the young Prince, as well as a regular passport from the Duke of Cadore, dated 24th July. . . ." ²

By the same post the Swedish Foreign Minister, in a letter giving his account of the course of events at Orebro, indicates that the wind was veering: "Two days more," he wrote, "and Fournier would have come too late. The majority of the Diet was already for the Prince of Ponte Corvo; but such is the loyalty that characterises the Diet, that they would not have abandoned the Government, and the King's advice would not have been disregarded. If the King decides

¹ *Ib.*, 1292.

² *H. H.*, 198, 199.

for the Prince, which seems probable, the affair will present very little difficulty."¹

It is evident that on 15th August it was the King's preference for his kinsman, and his repugnance to the election of a French *parvenu*, that blocked Bernadotte's way.

¹ *H. H.*, 199, 201 (D'Engeström's despatch of 15th August 1810).

CHAPTER XLVI

BERNADOTTE'S ELECTION AS PRINCE ROYAL OF SWEDEN

AUGUST 1810

"However good his qualities may be, don't you realise the absurdity of my taking a French corporal as the heir of my throne ?

—*The King of Sweden at Orebro, August 1810.*

As the old King seemed to find a difficulty in bringing himself to accept the French Marshal as his heir, Count Suremain, the King's Aide-de-Camp, was requested by the Ministers to represent to His Majesty that in their opinion the time had come to give way to the force of circumstances and to the tide of public opinion. Suremain found the King in a harrassed and despondent mood after a sleepless night. The following dialogue ensued :—

"*Suremain* : It is natural that Your Majesty should be upset. I earnestly hope that a crisis, so disastrous to Your Majesty's health and repose, may be brought to a speedy conclusion.

"*The King* : How can I help being disquieted when the happiness of Sweden and my own happiness and repose are all at stake, and when I am at a loss to know whom to choose ? I had fixed my choice on the Duke of Augustenburg. He is my cousin, and the brother of the late Prince Royal. It now appears that he will not do. You have yourself spoken against him. At present they are pressing me with their Bernadotte ! They say the Emperor wishes it. But his *Chargé d'Affaires* has taken up the opposite line. . . . You have heard of the arrival of Fournier ?

"*Suremain*: Yes, Sire. . . . Has he brought any authoritative despatches?

"*The King*: No. He has brought nothing except a passport and a portrait; and he has succeeded in turning everyone's head with them. D'Engeström has told me all sorts of absurdities. Good Heavens! if the Emperor wishes me to take a French General, surely he could do something more than leave me to guess at his meaning. Have you not told me that he did not like Bernadotte?

"*Suremain*: Yes, Sire. It was so well known in Paris last winter, that I was advised to see very little of him.

"*The King*: What do you think of him? Gustave Mörner praises him to the skies.

"*Suremain*: It is impossible for me to form an estimate of the character of one whom I have only met in society. He is a fine-looking man, very polite, and expresses himself with remarkable ease. His appearance and manner have an air of great distinction.

"*The King*: What! nothing that savours of the Revolution?

"*Suremain*: I could see nothing of the kind. He has a good reputation in France. He is not counted as one of the plunderers.

"*The King*: However good his qualities may be, don't you realise the absurdity of my taking a French Corporal as the heir of my crown?

"*Suremain*: Sire, I agree. It shocks me as much as it shocks Your Majesty. But I realise the danger of being forced. They say that his party has become very strong in Stockholm.

"*The King*: Skoljebrand's¹ reports speak of nothing else. He says that he cannot answer for the tranquillity of the city, if Bernadotte is not elected. Bourgeois vanity would be flattered by seeing one of their class on the steps of the throne.

¹ Skoljebrand was Governor of Stockholm and was a supporter of Bernadotte's candidature.

"*Suremain* : That is so, but they are also influenced by an honourable sentiment. Many of them think that a man of high military reputation might some day restore our national glory.

"*The King* : Bah ! What likelihood is there of any question of war at present ? You and I will be dead before Sweden can do anything of that kind. It is rest that we want now. Have you seen Adlerscreutz to-day ?

"*Suremain* : I have just left him.

"*The King* : What does he say about this affair ?

"*Suremain* : We discussed it for a long time. He thinks, and if Your Majesty will allow me to express my opinion, I think also, that it is urgently necessary to take a definite line. It appears that the arrival of Fournier has produced a great effect. It is believed that he has been sent by the Emperor, and that the Emperor wishes for Bernadotte. Everybody is running to Count Wrede to see the portrait of the little Oscar. There is more excitement and admiration and enthusiasm than I thought a Northern people capable of.

"*The King* : You speak of my taking a definite line. You wish then that I should propose Bernadotte.

"*Suremain* : Sire, I desire nothing except to see Your Majesty extricated from your difficulty. . . . Suppose, for example, that the enthusiasm in favour of Bernadotte were to become so strong in the different orders of the Diet, that Your Majesty after a long resistance were forced to yield. The struggle would be painful, and the defeat still more so. It would put you for the rest of your life in a disagreeable position towards your successor. That is to be avoided. It would never do to be forced.

"*The King* : Do you think that they could force me ?

"*Suremain* : Sire, think of the unhappy condition of our Kingdom and of Your Majesty's age."

The King then asked Suremain a number of questions about the Prince of Ponte Corvo, especially about his

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origin, his son, and his wife. Suremain told him all he knew. As he left the Royal Presence, the King said with emotion: "I am afraid I shall have to drain the cup. God alone knows how it will end."¹

Fournier's representations received confirmation, when Baron Lagerbielke's despatch of 29th July arrived, announcing the dismissal of Desaugiers from his post as French *Chargé d'Affaires* in Sweden, and notifying the Emperor's displeasure at Desaugiers' conduct in reference to the election. As Desaugiers had not only advocated the King of Denmark's claim but had also opposed those of the French Marshal, his dismissal seemed to be an indication of the Emperor's opinion and wishes in the latter's favour.

The last of the Swedish nobility to reconcile himself to the popular choice was Colonel Adlersparre, an old parliamentay hand, who shrewdly prophesied that, in the long run, Bernadotte's election would not contribute to the continuance of good relations with France. "Napoleon," said Adlersparre to the King, "will never forget that the Prince of Ponte Corvo was his subordinate. He will exact from the Prince Royal of Sweden the same obedience as when he was his subject. The Prince with his trained *coup d'œil* has doubtless already discovered all the weak points in the edifice which his master has erected. He will easily believe himself in a position to resist the Emperor's commands and decrees even by force. That will be the signal for a European war. There will then be no refuge, save in an alliance with the Asiatic hordes."² Having played the part of Cassandra so long as he found anybody to listen to him, Adlersparre saw that the Duke of Augustenburg's chances had become hopeless. When he gave in his adherence, the Diet became unanimous in its support of the Prince of Ponte Corvo.³

When the Secret Committee held their next meeting,

¹ *Suremain*, par Ernoul 237.

² *i.e.*, Russia.

³ *Geffroy*, 1294.

the situation had completely changed. The Committee had before them the flowing tide in the Diet in favour of Bernadotte and the communications made to the Foreign Minister by Fournier. Lastly, to cap everything, there was the despatch from Paris, announcing that the Emperor had dismissed the *Chargé d'Affaires*, Desaugiers. This piece of news came in the nick of time, and had no small influence on the result, as appears from the following letter :—

BARON D'ENGESTRÖM TO BARON LAGERBIELKE.

"OREBRO, 18th August 1810.

"Your despatch arrived at the very moment when it was bound to have effect. It was forthwith communicated to the Secret Committee, which decided in favour of the Prince of Ponte Corvo by a majority of 10 to 2. Their opinion was yesterday placed before the King in his Council of State, and His Majesty, being supported by the advice of his Council and of the Secret Committee, resolved to propose the Prince to the Diet. The election will take place, I think, on Tuesday, and there is every prospect of a unanimous vote in favour of the Prince of Ponte Corvo." ¹

The choice of the Diet on Tuesday, 21st August, was cast in favour of the Prince of Ponte Corvo. There was no opposition among the nobles. The other three orders displayed much enthusiasm. The peasants insisted on voting for him in the name of Bernadotte, not recognising him under his princely title. Their ardour was so great, that they had declared the unanimous result of their deliberation before the other three Estates of the Diet had begun to deliberate. On the same day, 21st August, the Foreign Minister reported the election of the Marshal in a letter addressed to the Swedish

¹ H. H., 251 (D'Engeström's despatch of 18th August 1810). The ebb and flow of the election are reflected in the despatches to our Foreign Office of the British Consul at Gothenburg, who wrote on 16th July that the Duke of Augustenburg was likely to be elected, and on 17th August that Bernadotte had a large majority in his favour.

Minister at Paris which was intended to be laid before Napoleon :—

BARON D'ENGESTRÖM TO BARON LAGERBIELKE.

"His Majesty had always rendered justice to the virtues and to the brilliant qualities which in such an eminent degree distinguish His Highness the Prince of Ponte Corvo ; and, your despatches having convinced him that the election of the Prince will be agreeable to His Majesty the Emperor of the French, the King, who desires to seize every opportunity of proving to the Emperor his friendship and devotion, has proposed to the nation the warrior who has distinguished himself in so many feats of arms under the banners of the great man who now rules the destinies of Europe. You know how that proposition has been received by the Diet. The decision at which they have unanimously arrived will be all the more precious in the eyes of the Prince, because he will see in it the expression of the mutual confidence which unites the King and his people." ¹

Count Gustave Mörner was selected to convey to the Prince of Ponte Corvo the offer, from the King and the Diet, of the succession to the Swedish throne. He was chosen for this errand of State, not because his young kinsman had played such an important part as King-maker, but because the Count had been the Colonel in command of the Swedish prisoners who fell into Bernadotte's hands at Lübeck in 1806. It was Bernadotte's courteous and considerate conduct towards those prisoners, that, more than anything else, had been the origin of his candidature. Truly at Lübeck, on that occasion, Bernadotte had led captivity captive.

The records of our Foreign Office contain an interesting letter from a Swedish Statesman, which was intended to be used for the purpose of reconciling the British Government to the election of Bernadotte. It represents the Swedish Diet as having been driven by the retirement of the Duke of Augustenburg "to choose

¹ *H. H.*, 254, 255 (D'Engeström's despatch of 21st August 1810).

between the Prince of Ponte Corvo and the King of Denmark, the declared enemy of England." Having indulged in this diplomatic inexactitude the writer proceeds to commend the new Prince Royal: "The Prince, whose equitable sentiments and independence of character are well known, is likely, better than any one else, to protect our commercial interests, and with that object in view maintain our existing relations with England. That will be his surest way of gaining the affection of his future subjects. He will become a Swede, and a good Swede, just as in Holland, the brother of the Emperor became a Dutchman; and our geographical position will enable him to do so. If you add to these considerations the absolute necessity for Sweden to have a firm and vigorous Prince in order to consolidate her domestic affairs, I feel sure that so enlightened a Government as that of England will do justice to the motives of our choice."¹

¹ F. O. State Papers 1810 (Copy of letter from Mr. de Jiarta).

CHAPTER XLVII

BERNADOTTE INSISTS UPON COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE FOR SWEDEN AND NAPOLEON ASSENTS

AUGUST 1—SEPTEMBER 5, 1810

"If your intention is to keep Sweden in a state of dependence, I beg of you to think no more of me in this matter. . . . If that is your intention, it would be better for Your Majesty to have to do with a Foreign Prince."—*Bernadotte to Napoleon, August 1810.*

THE election of the Prince Royal of Sweden has been described in the last chapter. In the present chapter we propose to inquire what was going on in Paris, while the election was proceeding in Orebro. Nothing that occurred in Paris after the end of July could have any influence upon the election. But, in order to form a just estimate of Bernadotte's subsequent action as Prince and as King of Sweden, it is essential to ascertain what were the conditions upon which he agreed to his change of nationality. From that point of view, what was said and done between him and the Emperor pending the election is of great interest and importance. Our informant is Baron Lagerbielke who was interested in watching both Napoleon and Bernadotte; and we are indebted to him for having recorded his impressions in seven despatches addressed to his Sovereign, in one of which he described himself as "the faithful echo of whatever I hear, and of whatever may interest Your Majesty."

The uncertainty which prevailed even among well-informed persons is illustrated by an interview between Lagerbielke and the newly appointed French Minister to Sweden, M. Alquier, who was a circumpsect individual, and had been rendered doubly so by the recent

misadventure of his predecessor, M. Desaugiers. The cryptic character of his remarks may be judged from the Baron's report. Referring to the pending election M. Alquier said that "such an enlightened nation as Sweden would appreciate the necessity of having careful regard to the character and personal qualities of the successor to the throne, which appeared to me to be a reference to the Prince of Ponte Corvo. He added that the Emperor would always persevere in his desire to see the Courts of Sweden and Denmark follow the same political system, which might be construed as being in favour of the Duke of Augustenburg."

Baron Lagerbielke's next visitor was a remarkable man, Admiral Verhuel, Count of Savenaar. He was the most prominent Dutchman of his day, and Napoleon had placed him at the head of a Commission, appointed to disentangle the affairs of Holland, which had recently been incorporated in the Empire. As soon as he was satisfied that Queen Hortense's son had no chance of election, Verhuel became a partisan of Bernadotte. He called on the Swedish Minister on the 4th August, and expressed himself to the following effect: "The union of Holland to the Empire has increased the interest of the Emperor in Sweden with which Holland has such close commercial relations. These ties have led the Emperor to speak to me about Sweden, and you may be satisfied of the excellent intentions of the Emperor towards Sweden, especially in certain events. You are in a position to render a great service to your King and to your country by representing matters in their proper light. I have had several interviews with the Prince of Ponte Corvo, and I have a strong conviction that the Prince combines all the qualities of character, heart, mind, and experience, which are necessary for a successor to the throne of Sweden. As regards the Duke of Augustenburg, I can only give expression to my wish that he may refuse. Your King and your

nation, under existing circumstances, require a Prince who, without liking war, knows how to make it."¹

Baron Lagerbielke had been a friend of Bernadotte and of his family, and a frequenter of the Marshal's house. Feelings of delicacy and of prudence kept them apart during the election crisis, until they met at a reception given by the Emperor on the night of the 15th August. Here Bernadotte went up to the Swedish Minister and delivered himself of a characteristic piece of high-flown declamation.

"Before we part," said the Prince of Ponte Corvo to Baron Lagerbielke, "I owe you a frank profession of faith. Look at my past career. Think of the position from which I started, and look at the position in which fortune has placed me. Do you suppose that a soldier of fortune, whose whole life, I dare affirm, offers no trait of ambition or of vanity, cannot be content with the degree of glory and of fortune to which favourable circumstances have raised him? He would be indeed insatiable to wish for more. He would be mad to aspire to the rank which is now in question. But he would be devoid of all feeling, if he were not touched by being honoured by the confidence of a nation such as yours, even if it were only a small minority of the nation. He would be a coward, yes, a coward—that is the word—if he were to refuse an honour because it was attended by risk, or to turn back from a path, because it was bristling with obstacles and dangers. I am not one of the great people of the earth. I abandon myself to my destiny, but I shall never try to force it. I do not wish to compare myself to those brave men who seek death in battle, but I have made the resolution never to shrink from it. I offer my veneration to your respected Sovereign, my high esteem to the Swedish Nation. A love of right and fair play,

¹ *H. H.*, 261-274 (Despatch of 22nd August 1810). Lagerbielke elsewhere refers to Bernadotte's dramatic style of conversation, and speaks of "*ses regards étincillants et son geste animé*," *H. H.*, 274.

rigid impartiality in the maintenance of order, the just recompense of merit, accessibility to all, leadership in battle, considerateness and sympathy with the people, these are the promises which I make and I shall keep them. One word more. I receive many letters from Sweden. Every day they are sent to me through the principal houses of Hamburg. But I have not written a single line. I give you my word of honour that I shall contract no new ties whatever the result. I feel an undying gratitude for the King and for the Nation, as well as for those who have honoured me by their good wishes."¹

This was certainly a very rhetorical pronouncement, and was hardly suited to an evening party at St. Cloud. Save for his disclaimer of ambition and of vanity the statement seems to have been a true mirror of the speaker's mind and character. It was delivered with all his distinctive sparkle and animation.¹ The Swedish Minister, when reporting the conversation to the King of Sweden, added: "With these words the Prince of Ponte Corvo disappeared in the crowd, thus sparing me the embarrassment of having to make a reply."

In the second and third weeks of August Baron Lagerbielke had four interviews with the Duke of Cadore, in the course of which he began to observe a change of tone on the part of the Emperor's Foreign Minister. He wrote to his Sovereign that he had to sustain "rude attacks," and that the manner of the Duke had become *aigre-douce*, a word which seems to betoken a blend of acerbity and politeness. As time went on, the Duke's acerbity seems to have got the better of his politeness. Lagerbielke reported that the Duke's manner had become severe and restrained, and exhibited bad humour in all its shapes (*toutes les nuances de mauvaise humeur*). Finally he informed the King that restraint had been laid aside, and that the Duke

¹ cf. *Bernadotte the First Phase* 32, 50, 60, 77, 202, 242, 253, 266, 283, 295, 325, 355, 361, 380, 389, 390, 397, 398, 403, 408, 425, 430, 459.

had conveyed the Emperor's displeasure in a veritable "explosion." "It was impossible for me," writes Lagerbielke, "not to recognise in that explosion the dissatisfaction with which the Emperor had learnt the news from Sweden which gives the second place to the Prince of Ponte Corvo, contrary to the Emperor's predilection in favour of the Prince."¹

On the 22nd August Baron Lagerbielke wrote a long despatch to the King of Sweden assuring him that Napoleon had entirely given up the cause of the King of Denmark, and warning him that the Emperor, while unable to declare his wishes publicly in favour of the Prince of Ponte Corvo, would be very indignant and resentful towards Sweden, if that nation failed to divine his preference for the French candidate.

While Napoleon was displaying a restless anxiety upon the subject of the pending election, Bernadotte's characteristic caution and prevision asserted itself more and more as the hour of his destiny approached. It was about the 20th August that an interview took place in which Bernadotte warned the Emperor in the clearest terms that he would never consent to become King of Sweden, except upon conditions of complete independence. The interview is recorded in the Swedish Minister's despatch of 22nd August.

In the presence of a Court Circle, Bernadotte seized an opportunity of inquiring for the second time whether his election would accord with the Emperor's policy. The Emperor replied in the affirmative. Bernadotte then begged the Emperor not to take in bad part an important question which he wished to put to him, and proceeded: "If your intention is to keep Sweden in a state of dependence . . . I beg of you to think no more of me in this matter. Such a position would be contrary to my feelings as well as to my political convictions. If that is your intention, it would be better

H. H., 191, 258, 260 (despatches of 13th and 22nd August 1810).

for Your Majesty to have to do with a Foreign Prince." The Emperor replied that no question of the kind would ever arise; that Sweden, owing to its geographical position, was not only sheltered by the sea from any danger of dependence, but even from being absorbed in a confederation. He added that the circumstance that her *métier* in Northern Europe was that of a balancing influence, afforded an additional reason in favour of the preservation of Sweden's entire political liberty; and that he desired nothing except to see her an independent ally of France.¹

Baron Lagerbielke appears to have been much impressed by Bernadotte's position at Court and at the efficiency of his private postal service. The Baron wrote to the King of Sweden: "At the Court *cercle* the Emperor spoke for a long time to the Prince of Ponte Corvo. For some time he has been the object of special attention. The Emperor has recently included him in all the small parties at Trianon, and there is not a day that the Prince does not go to St. Cloud once and sometimes twice. He is incredibly well informed about all that is going on in Sweden."²

At the end of August Baron Lagerbielke received from Orebro the news of M. Fournier's arrival at that place, and of the representations and promises which he had made, including the offers of financial help to the Swedish Treasury. The Baron made inquiries, the result of which he communicated to his Sovereign in two interesting letters of 31st August and 5th September from which the following extracts are taken:—

BARON LAGERBIELKE TO KING CHARLES XIII.

"As regards the sums in question, it is certain that the Prince's private fortune could not discharge them, and that, therefore, the Emperor must have a large hand in the matter, if M. Fournier really had authority to make such an offer. If the Prince confided such a

¹ H. H., 265.

² H. H., 262.

mission to him, he must have had an assurance of the means to fulfil his engagements, and his well-known character offers sufficient guarantee that he will fulfil them. According to the information that I have been able to obtain, the Prince enjoys an income of about 300,000 francs a year (£12,000), of which about half comes from his domains in Hanover, and the rest from the principality from which he takes his name. He has a fine house in Paris, and a country house some leagues away. I do not know whether he has capital, but I do not think so.¹ . . . I thought it necessary to see the Prince of Ponte Corvo in order to ascertain the nature of the mission of the said Fournier and the degree of confidence to be placed in him. As regards the questions of finance put forward by M. Fournier, the Prince did not wish them to be presented in that way. They seemed to him to be quite secondary, and to be so unworthy of attracting the attention of Your Majesty and of the Diet, that they were not fit to be the subject of any official communication. That was why he had not spoken to me about them. But, if the offers which he made should be considered to be of any use to Your Majesty and to the country, the Prince would ratify them with all his heart, and would give me an assurance to that effect, if I desired it."²

Before these words were penned, the news had reached Paris that the Prince of Ponte Corvo had been unanimously elected Prince Royal of Sweden, and all the anxieties and vexations which had pursued the Swedish Minister during the preceding five weeks had been set at rest.

Opposite opinions have been expressed by historical writers upon the subject of the degree of influence which Napoleon exercised upon the election of Bernadotte.

¹ *H. H.*, 271. The Baron Lagerbielke probably over-estimated the wealth of Bernadotte's principality, but under-estimated his total income. If he had no more than £12,000 a year he was worse off than some of the other Marshals. Ney told Metternich that his (Ney's) domains brought in 500,000 livres annually, and his offices and employments 300,000 livres annually. Metternich's *Autobiography*, i. 295.

² *H. H.*, 273 (Lagerbielke's despatch of 5th September)

Some historians have referred to Bernadotte as a King of Napoleon's creation, in the same sense that Joseph, Louis, Jerome, and Murat, were Kings of his creation. That idea is an entire misconception. Napoleon did not select Bernadotte. He would have preferred Eugène or Berthier or any other French Prince. On the other hand, some of the best writers have come to the no less erroneous conclusion that Napoleon was quite neutral, and that Bernadotte was elected "*ni grace à lui ni malgré lui.*" Perhaps it is correct to say that Bernadotte owed his eligibility and his popularity as a candidate for the vacant succession to his personal qualities and merits, but that he would not have succeeded in achieving more than a second place without the covert but effective support that was given to him by Napoleon.

CHAPTER XLVIII

BERNADOTTE REJECTS A CONDITION OF VASSALITY, AND BECOMES A SWEDE UNCONDITIONALLY

SEPTEMBER 1810

"BERNADOTTE.—Sire, would you make me a greater man than yourself by obliging me to refuse a crown ?

"NAPOLEON.—Very well, go, and let our destinies be accomplished."

—September 1810.

ON the 3rd September a courier reached Paris bringing the news of the result of the election.¹ On the following day Count Gustave Mörner and Count Rosen arrived, the former carrying to Bernadotte, and the latter to the Emperor, the act of election from the Diet and from the King. Count Mörner was received by the new Prince Royal on the 4th and Count Rosen by the Emperor on the following day. To Count Rosen the Emperor remarked significantly : "What will Russia say ?" In the evening the Emperor discussed the event in the presence of his Court, and was heard to remark that "the election of the Prince Royal of Sweden was a great event for Sweden and for France, and that he considered it as an honourable monument of his reign, and an addition to his glory."² The Emperor at once mooted the question of the adoption of the Prince Royal by the King of Sweden, which prompted the Swedish Minister to write the following letter next day :—

BARON LAGERBIELKE TO KING CHARLES XIII.

"The Prince of Ponte Corvo has formed a wish which he has asked me to submit to Your Majesty. He wishes

¹ *Memoirs of Metternich*, ii. 460.

² *H. H.*, 278-281 (Lagerbielke's despatch of 7th September 1810). 201

to be honoured with the title of your adopted son. The Emperor questioned him on the subject and seemed to desire it. The motives of the Prince are so laudable that I cannot pass them over in silence. Resolved as he is to do everything to anticipate the wishes of the King and to deserve his affection, the Prince thinks that his efforts towards those ends would have something more intimate and touching about them, if he is enabled to render to Your Majesty, not only the obedience which is due to the Royal dignity, but also the filial submission in which duty is blended with natural affection."

Bernadotte did not wait for any formal offer of adoption, treating it as constitutionally consequential upon his election. The point had been already discussed between Bernadotte and Napoleon, for whom the institution of adoption always possessed an absorbing interest. In the discussion on the framing of the Code Napoleon it was one of the subjects upon which he had taken a leading part. He said of it that it was an institution by which Society endeavoured to imitate Nature, and that it was "a kind of new sacrament." For many years he contemplated adopting a nephew; and until the birth of the King of Rome the idea of adoption as a means of perpetuating his family was always at the back of his mind.¹

After his election Bernadotte's thoughts seem to have turned towards his brother, the only surviving member of his family. He obtained for him from the Emperor a Patent of nobility; and before writing to the King of Sweden he sent on the 6th September to Pau the following letter by a special messenger:—

THE PRINCE OF PONTE CORVO TO M. JEAN
BERNADOTTE.

"MY DEAR BROTHER,—I send my Secretary, to be the bearer of your Letters Patent as Baron. I hope

¹ Cf. *Bonaparte and the Consulate*, Thibaudeau, pp. 173-176.

that in course of time the Emperor will grant me the title of Count for you. You will soon hear of the unexpected event which calls me to Sweden. I never formed such a wish or desire, but, since destiny calls me to succeed to the throne of the great Gustavus, I must answer the call without either pride or weakness. I embrace you. Your affectionate brother,

"J. BERNADOTTE."¹

On the following day, 7th September, the newly-elected Prince Royal wrote his first letter to his Sovereign and adoptive father:—

THE PRINCE OF PONTE CORVO TO KING CHARLES XIII.

"SIRE,—I shall not attempt to portray to Your Majesty the sentiments by which I have been penetrated, on learning that a nation illustrious in the annals of the world has deigned to fix its eyes upon a soldier, who owes all his merits to his love of country. It would be equally difficult for me to express adequately my gratitude, and my admiration for the astonishing magnanimity with which Your Majesty has yourself been pleased to propose as your successor a man with whom you were connected by no tie. The idea that Your Majesty believed you were acting for the benefit of the Swedish people is one so infinitely flattering for me as to impose upon me still greater obligations. I do not disguise from myself the extent and difficulty of these obligations, but I believe in my heart that I shall discharge them. Never did there exist a more powerful motive to inspire the soul of a mortal. Never was there presented to anyone such a noble opportunity of devoting his life to the happiness of a whole community.

"As soon as I received Your Majesty's letter, I lost no time in communicating it to His Majesty the Emperor and King. He has deigned to crown all the

¹ Wrangel, 107. *Vide Corr. de Nap.*, 17201, 17229. In the following December the Emperor gave to Baron Bernadotte an annuity of about £500 a year, which was the customary endowment of a Barony, to be charged upon the Principality of Ponte Corvo, and upon the domains in Westphalia and Hanover, which were relinquished by the Prince Royal on leaving France.

favours which he has conferred upon me by authorising me to become Your Majesty's adopted son. After what Your Majesty has deigned to say to me, I shall hasten my departure, so as to lay at Your Majesty's feet the homage due to your virtues, and to make Your Majesty the depository of my oaths of fealty.

"Hitherto the service of the country of my birth has been my glory and my happiness, but I dare flatter myself that France will deign to applaud my efforts on behalf of my new country. She cannot fail to look with interest upon one of her sons who is summoned by the destinies of the world to defend a generous people, which she has counted for a long time among her worthiest allies.

"MARSHAL BERNADOTTE,
Prince of Ponte Corvo."¹

Bernadotte took the earliest opportunity of taking a step which gratified the Swedish King and Royal family. He had become aware that a Princess of the Royal House had suffered serious loss by the confiscation of her property on the occasion of the territorial rearrangements that were made when Jerome Bonaparte became King of Westphalia. He at once proposed to give the Princess an equivalent for life out of his own domains, and took his chance of arranging matters with King Jerome.² On the same day Bernadotte wrote the following letter to the Emperor:—

BERNADOTTE TO NAPOLEON.

"SIRE,—I have the honour to inform Your Majesty that the Diet convoked at Orebro elected me, on 21st August, to be Prince Royal and successor of the throne of Sweden. I beg to lay before Your Majesty the letter in which the King announces the election. It now remains for me to take Your Majesty's orders, so that I may know whether Your Majesty authorises me to accept the dignity which the Swedish nation offers me. If it is my destiny to separate myself from Your Majesty,

¹ *H. H.*, 285, 286.

² *Ib.*, 275

I beg that you will believe that neither time or distance can ever weaken the recollection of Your Majesty's kindness, and of the sentiments by which I am penetrated towards your august person. I shall always remember that this unexpected election is due to the esteem with which Your Majesty has deigned to honour me. If there is one thing which can render that separation less painful, it is the reflection that the Swedish nation is animated by the highest veneration for Your Majesty. I hope, although separated, to be always near you, Sire, in my wishes and thoughts, and to be able to contribute to the progress of the great work which has been conceived by Your Majesty's genius for the welfare of Europe.

"MARSHAL BERNADOTTE,
Prince of Ponte Corvo." ¹

The following was the Emperor's reply as it appears in the expurgated and authorised edition of Napoleon's correspondence :—

THE EMPEROR TO MARSHAL BERNADOTTE, PRINCE OF PONTÉ CORVO.

"ST. CLOUD, 10th September 1810.

"MY COUSIN,—I have given orders to the Grand Judge to make out Letters Patent authorising you to accept the new dignity to which you have been called by the King and by the Diet of Sweden. I wish success and happiness to you and to the Swedes.

"NAPOLEON." ²

The Letters Patent contained a Clause binding the new Prince Royal of Sweden never to bear arms against France. This Clause was referred to in the Emperor's letter of 10th September in the following passage, which was omitted from the official version of the correspondence of Napoleon, published by Napoleon III, but has since come to light :—

"These Letters Patent give you authority to become

¹ *H. H.*, 286.

² *Corr. de Nap.*, 16390.

a Swede. One Clause only has been added to the effect that you personally cannot bear arms against France. The restriction is in conformity with the constitution of the Empire ; it agrees with your own inclinations ; and it is not opposed to the obligation of the throne which you are destined to ascend, which can never except in utter madness be at war with France.

" NAPOLEON." ¹

Bernadotte definitely refused to accept the Letters Patent with this restriction, and declared that, if the Emperor insisted, he would withdraw his acceptance of the Swedish offer. He declared that he would not agree to any condition or limitation upon his obligations as a subject of the King of Sweden. " I cannot," he said, " submit to the obligation which you propose. My election as Prince Royal of Sweden makes it impossible for me to contract any engagement that would make me the vassal of a foreign country . . . (*mon acte d'élection me défend contracter aucun engagement de vassalité étrangère*)."²

When Napoleon showed a disposition to insist, Bernadotte turned to him and said with characteristic promptitude and presence of mind : " Sire, would you make me a greater man than yourself by obliging me to refuse a Crown ? " The Emperor hesitated for a moment and then exclaimed : " Very well, go, and let our destinies be accomplished." " I beg your pardon, Sire," said Bernadotte. " I did not catch what your Majesty said." " Go," repeated Napoleon, " and let our destinies be accomplished." Bernadotte's question : " Sire, would you make me a greater man than yourself by obliging me to refuse a Crown ? " was the happiest of the many happy sayings that from time to time came from his lips in an emergency. It wrested Napoleon's assent to his complete emancipation from any fetter of vassality.

¹ *New Letters of Napoleon*, 100 ; *Lecestre, Lettres Inédites de Nap.*, ii. 66.

² *L'Univers*, 305.

At the Council of State the Emperor gave as his reason for striking out this Clause that it would not have a good effect in Sweden; but the conversation between himself and Bernadotte is well authenticated.¹ The following is the account of the matter given to the King of Sweden by Baron Lagerbielke:—

BARON LAGERBIEKE TO KING CHARLES XIII.

"Your majesty knows that the completion of the Letters Patent, releasing His Royal Highness from his oath of fidelity, were delayed on account of the requisite formalities. There is another more serious cause of delay, and Your Majesty will be pleased to hear that it has been settled most honourably. It was proposed at the Emperor's Council to follow the precedent established under Louis XIV when Philip V was placed on the throne of Spain. On that occasion a Clause was inscribed in the Letters Patent binding Philip as a Frenchman by birth never to bear arms against France. The Emperor felt that His Royal Highness the Prince Royal, having been called by the free vote of the Swedish people, such a reservation would not have a good effect on Sweden. Accordingly he struck out the Clause and in doing so said the the Prince: 'I count upon you, upon the King, and upon the Swedish Nation.' The Letters Patent were accordingly completed containing a simple release of the Prince from his oath of allegiance, and the Prince is now in possession of them."²

Some malignant persons have seen in this proceeding, evidence of an intention to turn against Napoleon on the first opportunity. But the best writers have acquitted Bernadotte of having entertained any such motives.³ It would be more true to say that it offered the clearest evidence of the spirit with which he approached his change of citizenship. He was divesting himself of his French, and adopting a Swedish, nationality; and he was giving notice to Napoleon and to all whom it might concern that he was resolved to take his new obligations

¹ Cf. Sarrans, i, 189; Capefigue viii, 388; Pingaud, 103.

² *H. H.*, 303, 304.

³ Schefer, 46, 47.

seriously and to observe and keep them. It was doubtless to this incident that Napoleon referred when he said at St. Helena : " I cannot say that he (Bernadotte) betrayed me. In a manner he became a Swede, and never promised that which he did not intend to perform. I can accuse him of ingratitude, but not of treachery." ¹ Upon this subject the Bonapartist propagandists have been less fair to Bernadotte than was Napoleon. They have clung to the charge of treachery, and, when Napoleon's correspondence was officially published, they did not disclose the evidence which refutes it.

¹ O'Meara, ii. 364.

CHAPTER XLIX

BERNADOTTE BIDS FAREWELL TO FRANCE

SEPTEMBER 1810

"He will not dare accept."—*Napoleon's remark when Bernadotte was invited by the Swedish Diet to become Prince Royal of Sweden. September 1810.*

"I have gambled, and I believe I have won."—*The old King of Sweden's remark after his first interview with the new Prince Royal.*

AFTER accepting the Swedish invitation, Bernadotte remained for less than four weeks in Paris before bidding farewell to France. Let us glance at some of the incidents which occurred during this interval.

Napoleon was apprehensive of the bad effect which the Swedish choice of a French Marshal might have at St. Petersburg. It was in view of this danger that he had so carefully avoided any open interference in the election. Now that it was over, he did his best to convince the Russian Government of his innocence of any participation in the result. He had an unanswerable case on paper, because the only written communications that had passed between the Swedish and French Governments were the letter of King Charles XIII, asking his support for the Duke of Augustenburg and his own reply of the 24th June vaguely assenting to that request. He now wrote a third letter to the Swedish King feigning surprise at His Majesty's change of mind; and he forwarded copies of these three letters to the Russian Government as evidence of his own *bona fides*.

Having placed this correspondence, so artless on its face, at the disposal of the Czar, and having corroborated it by articles inserted in his official journals, Napoleon

instructed the Duke of Vicenza, his Ambassador at St. Petersburg, to din the Czar's ears with vociferations of his entire guilelessness. The following were his instructions to his Foreign Minister: "You will write to the Duke of Vicenza that I have nothing to say to this whole business, that I could not resist an unanimous wish, and that I should have liked to see the Prince of Augustenburg or the King of Denmark elected. You will assure him that this is the exact truth, and that he must affirm it unreservedly in a noble and sincere tone; and that, if they raise any doubts, he must persist in the same language, because it is the truth, and one must always maintain the truth."¹

There was an outburst of indignation in the Russian official world and at the Russian Court when the news of the election of a French Marshal to the Swedish succession reached St. Petersburg. But the Czar took it very quietly, and seemed quite unconcerned. He sent one of his officers to convey to Bernadotte his congratulations and good wishes; and he had the satisfaction of learning from Vienna that Metternich had quoted Bernadotte as saying: "I know the thorny path on which I am entering. I have been chosen not for my *beaux yeux*, but because I am a General, and with the tacit understanding that I am to reconquer Finland. But to undertake a war with that object would be folly to which I shall never lend a hand."

To Austria Napoleon took up a no less uncandid attitude. Knowing that his father-in-law, the Austrian Emperor, would resent the elevation to royal rank of another French *parvenu*, he professed agreement with that point of view in an interview with the French Ambassador.

Metternich writing from Paris to the Emperor Francis of Austria on the 5th September, informed him that the news of the nomination of the Prince of Ponte

¹ *Corr. de Nap.*, 16876.

Corvo as successor to the throne of Sweden had just reached him. He added that "One word of disapproval on his (the Emperor's) part would no doubt have ensured the failure of the intrigues in favour of the Prince of Ponte Corvo. It is now proved that he encouraged them in every way."¹ It is evident that Metternich was not deceived by Napoleon's artful disclaimers.

It was on the 8th September that Metternich had a conversation with the Emperor of which he has left a note. Napoleon feigned the utmost astonishment at the news of Bernadotte's election, and produced his correspondence with Charles XIII as evidence of his neutrality, and of his alleged preference for the election of the Duke of Augustenburg. He blamed the Russian Cabinet for not having opposed Bernadotte's candidature; and asked Metternich to believe that, if he had been consulted earlier on the subject, he would have prevented it, but that it was now too late. "The choice of the Prince of Ponte Corvo is displeasing to me from two points of view: it endangers my relations with Russia; and by raising a private individual to a throne, a wrong is done to existing Sovereigns." This insincere protest on behalf of the rights of "existing Sovereigns" was intended to be repeated to his father-in-law, the Emperor Francis.

The following passages in the colloquy between the greatest man and the greatest diplomat of that day deserve to be quoted:—

"*Metternich*: I agree most sincerely as to the undesirability of increasing the number of private individuals placed on thrones, and I think that Your Majesty should consider it a great advantage to remain the solitary instance.

"*Napoleon*: You are right; that consideration, which is personal to me and my family, has often made me regret having placed Murat on the throne of Naples.

¹ *Memoirs of Metternich* [Eng. Tr.], ii. 460 et seq.

It does not do to think of all your relatives and cousins. I ought to have appointed him Viceroy, and I ought not to have given thrones even to my brothers. But we only become wise by experience. As for myself, I ascended a throne which I had created; I did not enter on the inheritance of another. I took what belonged to no one. I ought to have stopped there, and to have appointed only Governor-Generals and Viceroys. Besides, you need only consider the conduct of the King of Holland to be convinced that relatives are often far from being friends. As for the Marshals you are right. Some of them have already indulged in dreams of greatness and independence. . . . Do you know Bernadotte well?

"*Metternich*: I am acquainted with him only in the ordinary intercourse of Society; and I am not, therefore, able to form any opinion of him.

"*Napoleon*: He has plenty of brains. I have always found this to be the case; but he will have a great deal of difficulty in maintaining his position. The nation expects everything from him; he is the god from whom they demand bread, but I cannot see that he has any talent for government; he is a good soldier,¹ and that is all. For my part, I am delighted to get rid of him, and I ask nothing better than his removal from France. He is one of those old Jacobins with his head in the wrong place, as they all have, and that is not the way to keep on a throne. If you see him again, sound him a little, and your opinion will be the same as mine. In any case I could not refuse my consent, were it only that a French Marshal on the throne of Gustavus Adolphus is one of the best tricks that could be played on England!"

Napoleon in this conversation indulged in more than the average number of terminological inexactitudes, but in this last remark he revealed himself. It was the prospect of seeing one of his Marshals on the throne of

¹ Vandal, *Napoléon et Alexandre*, i. 456. "*Il (Napoleon) prisait ses qualités militaires, sans l'avoir jamais aimé.*" This statement to Metternich may be contrasted with Napoleon's depreciatory remarks at St. Helena in reference to Bernadotte's military talents.

Gustavus Adolphus, and the moral effect which that spectacle would produce upon other countries, and especially upon England, that made Napoleon wish for an event which was fraught with danger for himself, and in fact contributed to his fall.

At one moment the Emperor apprehended that Bernadotte might refuse the crown. Had he not twice told the Emperor that he would not accept such an offer unless he received satisfactory answers to his questions? Was he looking for an excuse to escape? It was probably in view of these signs of hesitation that the Emperor is said to have pronounced the words: "He will not dare" (*il n'osera*), in the presence of several courtiers who might be relied upon to carry them very quickly to the Marshal's ears; and some writers have drawn the rather far-fetched inference that this remark of the Emperor's fixed Bernadotte's resolution. A romantic tale was also current that Oscar, walking with his father in the park of their country home, influenced his wavering mood by saying: "Why, papa, will you not make that brave people happy?"¹

An interesting account has been given of the farewell words of Napoleon to the Bernadotte family, who were received by him a few days before the departure of the Prince Royal. To the new Prince Royal the Emperor said: "I cherish the hope that your new interests will always be in accord with your former duties. You are called to a great and noble destiny. Whatever the future may bring forth, your heart will always belong to France. My good wishes will accompany you, and, if I can be of service to you, you may count on me." These were cordial words, but they were not destined to stand the test of coming events. The Emperor took Désirée's hand, and said that her love for her son should make her accept her new position with pleasure. He patted Oscar's head, and added: "My child, you are

¹ Pingaud, 98; cf. Sorel, vii. 455.

destined to wear a crown. Some day you will feel its burden. So long as good fortune attends you, you will have no lack of admirers. I hope that you will never experience adversity, so that you may not learn to despise your fellow men."¹

We may be permitted to doubt that Bernadotte required much persuasion or stimulus to induce him to accept a throne. It is true that he would never have accepted it upon terms that would have left him dependent upon foreign control. Neither would he have accepted it, unless Napoleon had withdrawn the Clause in his Patent binding him never to fight against France, because this would have been a form of suzerainty. It was not the first time that he had made conditions and had insisted upon them. In 1799 he had refused the command in chief of the Army of Italy (which was the limit of his ambition in that day) unless supplied with 20,000 more men than the Government were prepared to give him.² In 1803 he had refused the Governor-Generalship of Louisiana—a post which had great attractions for him—unless furnished with 3,000 French soldiers and 3,000 French settlers, to enable him to maintain and develop the colony.³ Never did this daring soldier of fortune, reckless of his life although he was in battle, undertake any enterprise, no matter how dazzling, without weighing the consequences. Upon this particular occasion it was Napoleon, and not Bernadotte, who took a leap in the dark.

The Emperor is said to have been haunted at the last moment by mysterious misgivings. A few nights before the Prince Royal's departure Napoleon dreamt that two ships were launched together on a stormy sea, one his own, and the other Bernadotte's. Suddenly his companion's ship separated itself and sailed away into the mists, leaving Napoleon's battering in the storm. On

¹ Geffroy, 1295.

² *Bernadotte, The First Phase*, lvii. pp. 356-357.

³ *Supra*, Chapter XI.

the day of Bernadotte's departure he was heard to say : " He does not like me. We have not understood each other. It is too late. He has his interests, his politics, and I have mine." ¹ An eminent writer sums up these apprehensions in a sentence : " Bernadotte had been a rival in France, might he not become an adversary in Europe ? " ² In the same sense a French correspondent of the British Foreign Office wrote prophetically that the election of Bernadotte to the throne of Sweden presaged, in his opinion, a new war between the Emperor and the Northern Powers of Europe. ³

On Sunday, 25th September, Bernadotte and Désirée were invited to the Emperor's family dinner party in their new rank of Royal Highnesses ; M. Frederic Masson says that this was a favour without precedent, which entailed a long conference between the Grand Master of the Ceremonies, the Grand Marshal, and the Grand Chamberlain, and that Bernadotte, who came in Swedish costume, was presented as Prince Royal, and took formal leave of the Empress.

On the following day, 26th September, wrote Lagerbielke, " the Prince, accompanied by a Staff of Swedish Officers, was received at a solemn farewell audience by the Emperor. Before being received by the Emperor I witnessed a remarkable and touching scene, when the Marshals of the Empire, all soldiers of high reputation, advanced to say farewell to their former brother-in-arms, whom fate had just raised above them. The Prince himself was deeply moved, and the farewell scene proved how much he is loved by the public and by the Army." ⁴ The Swedish Minister did not know the real sentiments of the Marshals. Some of them, like Ney and Lefebvre, sincerely liked Bernadotte ; others, like Berthier, disliked him ; while one of them, Davout, hated him.

¹ Pingaud, 105 ; Geffroy, 1294, citing Van Schenkel, v.

² Sorel, vii. 435.

³ F. O. State Papers (1810), 27/81. Letter of Col. Fromant.

⁴ H. H., 304.



BERNADOTTE AND DESIRÉE
 Prince and Princess Royal of Sweden 1810



On the 27th September Bernadotte paid a last visit to his country house at La Grange. With Désirée, he spent the 28th at Morfontaine as the guest of his sister-in-law, the Queen of Spain. On the 29th he made his final preparations. On the 30th he said good-bye to France, and started on the greatest of all his adventures.

The following was Napoleon's letter of courtesy to his old flame, Désirée:—

THE EMPEROR TO THE PRINCESS OF PONTE CORVO.

"MY COUSIN,—I have received your letter of the 4th. You must have long since been persuaded of the interest which I take in your family. I have no doubts that the noble sentiments with which you have inspired your son will render him worthy of the high destinies to which he is called.

NAPOLÉON."¹

Napoleon little thought that, by contributing to the election of Bernadotte, he was founding the most permanent monument of his era, and that it would be truly said a century later by a writer of great distinction that "the only trace of his (Napoleon's) reign now visible on the face of Europe is the Bernadotte dynasty in Sweden, which was not the direct result of conquest, nor the direct work of Napoleon."²

Before we close the second Act of the drama of Bernadotte's life, let us glance at his farewell letter to Madame Récamier;² and then let us look forward and take the evidence of an eye-witness as to the impression which he made upon his new Sovereign and adoptive father.

THE PRINCE ROYAL OF SWEDEN TO MADAME
RECAMIER.

"MADAME,—When leaving France forever, I deeply regretted that your absence from Paris made it impossible for me to take your commands and to bid you

¹ Bingham, ii. 59.

² Rosebery, 240.

farewell. . . . M. de Narbonne has been so kind as to undertake the duty of forwarding to you my homage. We have often spoken of you, of your estimable qualities, and of the tender interest which you inspire in all persons who approach you. Farewell, Madame. Receive the assurance of the sentiments which I have consecrated to you, and which neither time nor the icy North can ever extinguish. CHARLES JOHN."¹

Count Suremain happened to be the Aide-de-Camp in Waiting, when Bernadotte after his arrival at Stockholm was received by the old King. The Aide-de-Camp saw the new Prince Royal cross the ante-chamber with characteristic assurance and enter the Royal Presence. After a time the King sent for the Queen, and the King and Queen remained with their adopted son. When they came out, the King approached Suremain and said to him : " I have gambled, and I believe I have won." ² The old King never changed his mind. How the gamble turned out for the other players at the table must be reserved for another volume, in which, if time and opportunity permit, the story of Bernadotte's strange career will be carried to its conclusion.

¹ Madame Récamier, *Souvenirs*, etc., i. 165, 166. Charles John were the names which he assumed as Prince Royal.

² *Surcmain*, par Ernouf.

CHAPTER LI

A RETROSPECT AND A CONTRAST

"Love of glory can only create a great hero; contempt of it creates a great man."—TALLEYRAND.

WE are now in a position to look back at the six years and four months in which Marshal Bernadotte was the subject and the servant of the Emperor Napoleon. During this period the Emperor assigned to the Marshal a continuous series of civil or military *rôles*. In 1804 Bernadotte became Governor of Hanover; in 1805 Commander of the left wing of the Grand Army in the campaign against Austria, and of a Corps at the battle of Austerlitz; in 1806 Governor of Anspach, Prince of Ponte Corvo, Commander of the Vanguard of the Grand Army in the campaign against Prussia, Commander of a Corps in the manœuvres of Jena, and of the Centre in the pursuit of the Prussians from Jena to Lübeck; in 1807 Commander of the left wing in the campaign of Poland, and Governor of the Hanseatic Towns; in 1808 Commander-in-Chief of the army which occupied Denmark and was intended to invade Sweden, and of half the troops in Germany; in 1809 Commander of the Saxon Corps in the campaign of Wagram, and Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Antwerp for resisting the Walcheren Expedition. Behind these strenuous actualities there was a background of golden dreams which the Marshal may be excused for having indulged in, since the Emperor himself, down to the time of his second marriage, appears to have held Bernadotte in reserve, after his own brothers and

brother-in-law, as a possible King of Spain, and even as a possible successor to the Imperial throne.¹

At St. Helena Napoleon spoke disparagingly of Bernadotte as "the twentieth among his generals"; but this sneer is belied by the list of the military employments with which he actually entrusted him. In moments of chagrin or ill-humour Napoleon sometimes belittled the best of his Marshals. For example, he is found describing Masséna as a "poor general"; Davout as a soldier whose "ideas of war were most erroneous and foolish"; Ney as unfit to command more than 10,000 men, and as a mere General of Division who ought not to have received a baton; and Soult as "only fit to be the intendant of an army."² In less disgruntled moments he acknowledged the military merits of these generals; and they were foremost among those whom he selected to conduct his armies when his throne and all his fortunes were in the balance.

Napoleon frequently praised Bernadotte's generalship;³ and he showed a decided disposition to employ him in critical campaigns, when independent operations had to be carried out under some other leadership than his own. This was a wise proceeding. Bernadotte, was always nervous and ill at ease when carrying out a combined manœuvre, particularly when he had to follow orders of Napoleon communicated to him through Berthier; but his nervousness disappeared, when he was placed in a detached position. Having served for eleven years as a ranker, and for about six years in the Revolutionary wars in Germany and in Italy, he was a finished professional soldier, who could be trusted to conduct separate operations without a hitch, and, when it was possible, without firing a shot. He was cautious,

¹ *Supra*, 193, 209.

² Gourgaud, i. 95, 306, 307, 585; ii. 258; O'Meara, i. 127; *Corr. de Nap.*, 19778

³ *E.g., supra*, 166, 170, 178, 184, 185 (to Jerome), 313 (to Metternich) *cf. Bernadotte, The First Phase*, 247.

restrained, and careful of the comfort of his troops. Nevertheless, when the occasion required energetic and immediate action, as was the case at Teining in 1796, at Halle and Lübeck in 1806, and at Mohrungen in 1807, he displayed extraordinary resourcefulness and daring.¹ His personal bravery was the one good quality which his enemies never denied him. He thought nothing, when a Marshal, of riding to the head of a cavalry charge, into the middle of a *mêlée*, or into the hottest part of the firing line.² Comparisons are odious; but it would be safe to place him, for leadership and gallantry, in the front rank of the Napoleonic Marshals of 1810 with Masséna, Davout, Berthier (for staff work), Murat (for cavalry work), Ney, Lannes, Soult, and perhaps MacDonald. Suchet had not yet come to the front. Augereau was not what he had been in 1796. Oudinot, Lefebvre, and the rest, were splendid fighters, but were hardly in the same class.

While Napoleon showered honours and employments upon Bernadotte, he preferred to keep him away from France, and to give him the command of foreign rather than of French troops. This preference was an intelligible one, because he knew that the Marshal was one of the men who were regarded as his possible successors, and he was afraid of his propensity for making partisans.

Bernadotte believed himself to have been the object of treachery and malevolence on the part of the Headquarters Staff. He had quarrelled with Berthier at their first meeting, and the quarrel had never been made up.³ To Berthier he attributed the pin-pricks which from time to time he had to bear. Examples of such pin-pricks were the inadequate supply of cavalry assigned to him at Austerlitz; the non-receipt of General Orders before Jena, before Eylau, and before the campaign of Wagram; and the withdrawal of his reserve at the

¹ *Bernadotte, The First Phase*, 149; *supra*, 149, 165, 166, 177-180.

² *Supra*, 163, 164, 183. ³ *Bernadotte, The First Phase*, 195-197.

combat of Enzersdorf.¹ It seems reasonable to assume that, in the case of these as well as of other mishaps, there was some military necessity, reason, or excuse ; but it is possible that, if any particular marshal had to be placed at a disadvantage for some military necessity, reason, or excuse, Bernadotte was in danger of being marked out as that one.

As a public man Bernadotte was the only Marshal who had any prestige or political following ; and it was on that account that Napoleon bargained with him and counted with him on a different basis from the rest. As an administrator he showed qualities which were rare in that age. Marmont, whose memory still lingers as a legend in Dalmatia, was the only other soldier of that day who showed an aptitude for wise government. As a ruler of men Bernadotte displayed firmness, tact, and humanity. He also showed the possession of an economic instinct which helped him to promote the prosperity of all the peoples who came under him. The imperial *régime*, so burdensome and painful when applied to conquered countries by Governors such as Davout, became tolerable and even popular when it was administered by this prescient and dexterous Gascon.

Between the Emperor and the Marshal recriminations and criticisms were exchanged from time to time. There was no affection or attachment on either side. But the bargain which they made before the initiation of the Empire was kept by both of them. Bernadotte received an ample share of the fruits of victory and conquest ; and rendered substantial services to the Emperor. The charges of treachery, which were invented at a later period, were utterly groundless. The present writer has been unable to find a vestige of foundation for them.

It is difficult to form a just estimate of Bernadotte's personal qualities. His apologists, such as Touchard

¹ *Supra*, 119, 134, 182, 206, 219.

Lafosse, represented him as an admirable Crichton without fault, imperfection, or blemish. On the other hand, some of the authors of Napoleonic memoirs gratified their spleen by calumniating the ex-Marshal, who had a hand in the fall of the Empire. M. Léonce Pingaud, in *Bernadotte, Bonaparte et les Bourbons*, approaches the subject with what Mr. H. A. L. Fisher has happily described as "copious knowledge and real literary distinction."¹ M. Pingaud is impartial with "the impartiality of the hanging Judge." "Perhaps," wrote the chivalrous E. M. de Vogüè, "the author (M. Pingaud) may be considered very severe; he sees the dark side of his hero, who is in turn, or both at once, Iago and Scapin."²

Bernadotte was a Gascon from Béarn; and had both the good qualities and the defects of the race from which he sprang. He was brave, amiable, courteous, considerate, merciful, generous. It pleased him to please those around him and beneath him. On the other hand he was vain and inordinately ambitious. It comes badly from the adherents of the most ambitious man of that age to reproach him with ambition. But the charge of vanity stands on a different footing. Napoleon worshipped power rather than mere renown. The contrast between him and lesser men such as his Marshals is reflected in Talleyrand's saying that "the love of glory can create a great hero, but it is the contempt of it that creates a great man." Neither of these remarkable personages had much regard for veracity. Napoleon departed from it whenever it was necessary to do so for the maintenance of his imperial authority or for the attainment of his political aims. Bernadotte disregarded it for the purpose of gaining or of gratifying adherents, or of oiling the wheels of smooth administration. While we condemn their mendacities,

¹ *The English Historical Review* (1901), Vol. XVI, 804.

² E. M. de Vogüè in *Le Gaulois*, May 22nd, 1901.

we are at the same time tempted to inquire seriously whether they were more reprehensible than those of the politicians of more peaceful eras and of more settled lands, who, if they have lied less notoriously, have had less temptation and excuse.

Bernadotte's early life, which was the subject of *Bernadotte, The First Phase*, has been summed up by an eminent historian in three words: "*Bernadotte commença noblement.*"¹ He "began nobly" in the days of the French Revolution and of the First Republic, because he was animated by a genuine enthusiasm for Liberty, and by a strong conviction that he was himself one of its messengers. Thus it came about that his ambition harmonised with a lofty purpose, and that the first stage of his career was perfectly rounded and self-accordant.² The second stage of his life has been described in the present volume. First there came his ineffectual struggle to defend the Republic from the usurpation of the First Consul, which ended in defeat and surrender. When the Republic disappeared, and the Empire took its place, Bernadotte's ambition lost its elevating inspiration. He joined Napoleon in a wild adventure, where success became the adventurers' only touchstone, and great risks were run to gain great prizes. His prize was a throne. How he managed to win it has been told in the preceding pages. How he managed to keep it and to transmit it to his descendants will be told in another volume.

¹ Sorel, ii. 547.

² *Bernadotte, The First Phase*, 51, 472

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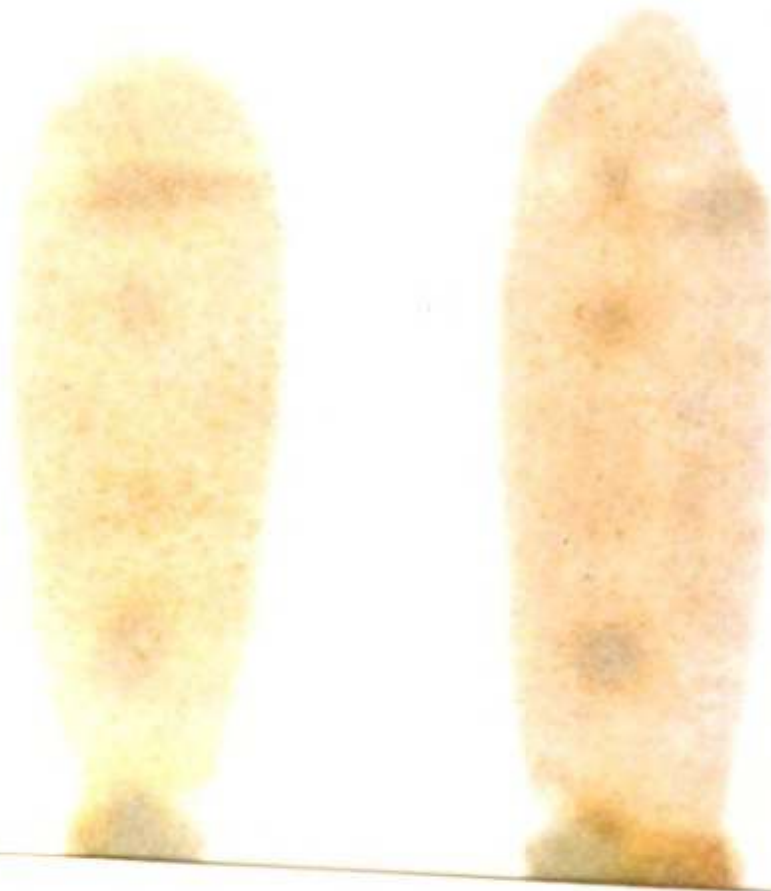
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